Study Unit

Decorating from Building Plans

Most interior decorating does involve working with existing homes. However, at some time, you may be asked to decorate a home that isn't even built yet! To complete the job successfully, you must understand what the client—and the builder or architect—has planned.

In this study unit, you'll learn how to use blueprints to plan decorating schemes, and you'll learn how to offer help and suggestions for remodeling jobs. You'll acquire the ability to work closely with professionals such as builders, contractors, and architects. In addition, you'll develop the skills necessary to evaluate house plans for type and for efficiency. With this study unit, you'll be one step closer to being a decorator who is prepared for any circumstances you may encounter.

When you complete this study unit, you'll be able to

- Identify certain decorating problems or situations when reading blueprints
- Recognize a wide variety of architectural symbols and terms
- Name three types of house plans
- Evaluate house plan layouts according to their activity zones
- Discuss specific decorating problems and solutions, room by room
- Apply decorating ideas in a variety of practice situations

Preview

ONLINE RESOURCES

Remember to regularly check "My Courses" on your student homepage. Your instructor may post additional resources that you can access to enhance your learning experience.

Contents

WHEN THE CLIENT BUILDS A HOME 1

When Is the Decorator Involved? 3
Architectural Drawings 9

TYPES OF HOUSE PLANS 19

One-Story Plans 19
Two-Story Plans 23
Split-Level Plans 23
Evaluating Floor Plans 24
Floor Plans for Special Needs 28

ROOM BY ROOM—PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS 32

Kitchens 32
Bathrooms 40
Pool and Patio Areas 48
Entries 50
Fireplaces 52
Dining Areas 55
Bedrooms 56
Sound Control 59
Energy Savers 59
Mastering the Grand Plan 61

SELF-CHECK ANSWERS 63

Decorating from Building Plans

WHEN THE CLIENT BUILDS A HOME

As an interior decorator, you may sometimes be called upon to work with architects, contractors, and remodelers. To communicate with them effectively, you must understand a little of their language.

For an interior decorator, the starting point is being able to read blueprints. This ability enables a decorator to

1. Interpret blueprints in light of the interior decorating challenge they represent
2. Develop a decorating plan and provide an estimated decorating budget at the blueprint stage
3. Work with the architect or contractor to alter any features that would pose decorating problems or practical problems related to interior spaces

The decorating principles and techniques you've already learned are the same ones you'll apply to a decorating job when the home doesn't yet exist. The difference is that in decorating existing homes, you need only learn to visualize the changes you'll make from the present decor. In such a case, you're concerned only with communicating your vision to the client and then bringing it to life as you both see it (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1—When you're decorating or remodeling an existing home, your purpose is to clearly present your plan to the homeowner.

When a client is building a home, you must visualize the nonexistent room or home itself. You must also be concerned with whether your vision of the future home is the same as the vision of the architect or builder, as shown on a *building plan,* or *blueprint.* A blueprint is a plan for a building. It contains enough detail so that workers can construct the building from the print. The name *blueprint* comes from the original photographic process that produced the plan in white on a blue background (Figure 2A). Later, blueprints were reproduced with blue lines on white paper (Figure 2B).

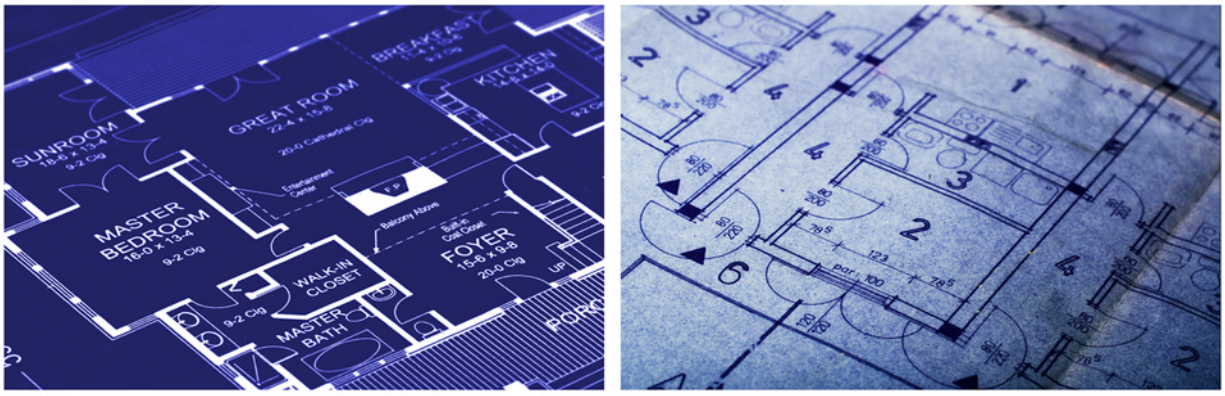


FIGURE 2—View A shows an original blueprint consisting of white lines on a blue background. Later these blueprints were developed as blue lines on white paper, as in view B.

Today, computers with programs such as *computer-assisted drawing (CAD)* are used to create the plans for homes and other buildings. Building plans are much easier to develop with such programs, but more importantly, the plans can be easily altered or corrected as needed.

When decorating from a building plan—either a blueprint or a computer-generated plan—you must be able to visualize what the finished home will look like. Then, you must be able to present that vision to your client.

A building plan is the tool of communication. If you learn to read the language of a building plan, you'll avoid any costly surprises when the builder's vision becomes a reality (Figure 3). Otherwise, you could discover that the builder's vision isn't the vision you expected.

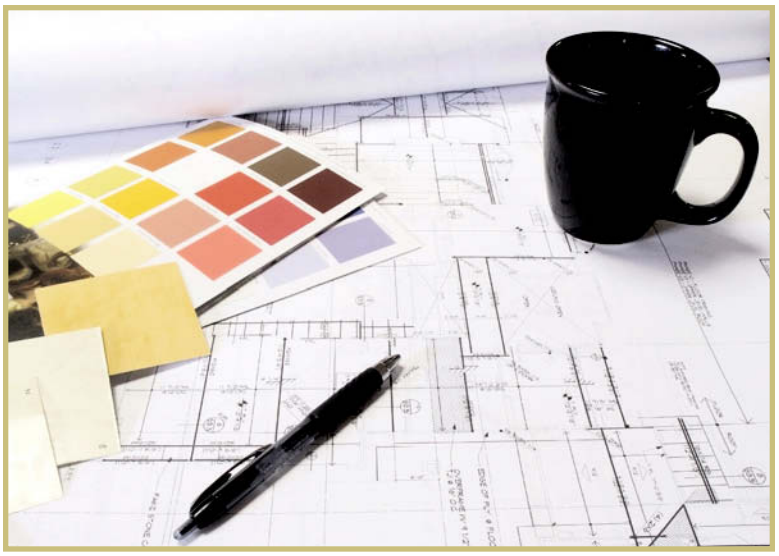


FIGURE 3—If you're decorating a home or a room in a home that has not yet been built, study the plans carefully to make sure you understand what the building or room is going to look like when it's finished.

Take Your Survival Bag

When you're planning your interior decorating with the blueprints, Deborah Burnett of HGTV suggests taking a "survival bag" with these items:

- Legal pad
- Reliable pen
- Brightly colored paper
- Flashlight
- Several push pins
- Sturdy tape measure at least 1.5 in. (inches) wide
- At least 100 ft (feet) of electrical cord for measuring

When Is the Decorator Involved?

Three different situations commonly require an interior decorator to become involved with a yet-to-be-built or uncompleted home:

1. A client is building a home with the assistance of an architect, a contractor, or a builder.
2. A client is purchasing an unbuilt or unfinished home (freestanding or on its own land) from a builder-developer.
3. A client is having an older home remodeled or an addition built.

Just how far and in what ways does an interior decorator become involved in each of these situations? The answer depends partly on the relationship of the interior decorator to the particular client. Let's consider the typical ways in which a decorator is involved in each situation.

Client Building a Home

Independent custom home building isn't done as frequently as it used to be. Today, a builder-contractor may be constructing his or her own home, since building costs won't be as high for a professional builder as they would be for others. Generally, a professional builder has very strong ideas about every detail of how the house should be completed. Although the builder may work with an architect to develop a plan, he or she isn't apt to consult an interior decorator in the building stages. If an interior decorator's services are used at all, it's generally when the house is completed.

How much an interior decorator becomes involved with non-builder clients at the house-planning and building stage often depends on the relationship between the interior decorator and the client.

If a client has used your decorating services before, it's very possible that the client will consult you to get your ideas in the first planning stages, even before he or she consults with an architect or builder. If you'll be decorating the completed home, this opportunity may allow you to coordinate your ideas for the client with the creation of the building. As you've seen throughout your program, an interior decorator is concerned with the uses and shapes of spaces, as is the architect. If the client is inexperienced and unsure of whether the architect is providing the best house plan possible, he or she may rely on you to make certain decisions. (However, it's the client who hires the architect, and the client-architect relationship is theirs, not yours. You are, to some extent, an "outsider" in that relationship. You shouldn't enter into it as a third party to any greater extent than the client wants you to or than the architect will tolerate. Some architects have a very low tolerance level.) It's generally as well to make any

comments or direct any questions you have directly to the client and let the client work with the architect. This practice keeps you from ending up in the middle of a three-way misunderstanding regarding a job that isn't yours.

The client may or may not want your opinions on materials to be used in construction of the home, or on appropriate style and spaces. However, he or she will very likely want your opinion on finishing materials and colors for such elements as kitchen counters and flooring, choice of bathroom fixtures and flooring (Figure 4), hardware throughout the house, and on all matters related to the finished appearance of the interior.

FIGURE 4—Your client may want your opinion on bathroom fixtures, tile, flooring, and a wallcovering.

Client Purchasing an Unfinished House or Condominium

Persons contracting—before the homes are completed—to purchase developers' homes or condominiums are commonly given choices, within a certain price range, of various finishing materials such as carpeting, window coverings, lighting fixtures, and countertop or tile colors. Builders generally offer these optional selections in a price range considered appropriate to the cost of the buildings in the development.

A person who plans to have you decorate his or her home may consult with you at an early stage so that you can help determine these choices. Doing so will certainly make your later decorating easier, since you won't have to work around ill-chosen items (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5—Clients may ask for your help in selecting paint colors, flooring, wallcoverings, and other items for a home that's being built.

In some cases, an interior decorator (by agreement with the builder) maintains an office on the site of a new residential development. The decorator is then available to assist home purchasers in making their optional selections and to offer further decorating services. The buyer who has been happy with a decorator's previous work, however, will generally choose to have his or her own decorator make selections for the new home purchase rather than use the services of the on-site decorator.

Clients may not like any of the standard options offered by the builder. In such cases, clients can upgrade to higher-quality, more expensive versions of standard items. For example, a builder may offer wall-to-wall carpeting as standard, and offer a choice of a basic carpet in a range of colors or a low-pile carpet in a range of colors. Both of those carpets are of similar cost-per-yard value. If the home buyer prefers a higher-quality carpet (Figure 6), that carpet is considered to be an upgraded item. The builder may agree to install the upgrade in place of the lower-cost standard option, but the buyer of the home will pay for the added cost.

In addition to upgrades, some clients may choose extra options. Builders use different names to describe these extra options, such as deluxe option features. With standard options, buyers are offered a choice (for example, color, finish, or design). This choice is related to an item that's included as part of the finished house. Extra features or deluxe options may be upgrades of standard items, or they may be features that the builder is willing to install but doesn't offer as standard in the finished homes (such as a

FIGURE 6—A home buyer may choose to purchase more expensive carpeting in place of the standard choices offered by the builder.

skylight or an automatic garage door opener). Selecting most of these items is a matter for the client to decide, based purely on his or her preferences and budget. But even here, the client may seek the benefit of your advice. Your professional awareness of other people's experiences with the items in question can help the client make a decision. And in cases where the optional feature does affect the decor plan, you should certainly offer your client advice (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7—If the choices a client is making will affect the decorating plan, you should help your client with sound advice.

In fact, your ongoing experience with clients and new homes will give you the ability to gradually offer valuable aid to such clients. For example, in viewing the model home from which the client made his or her purchase and then the home, itself, under construction, you can make sure that the bathroom fixtures shown in the model are indeed the same as those being installed in the home. Even though this part of the job isn't your responsibility, your experienced eye can help to ensure that your client is getting what he or she pays for.

Client Remodeling a Room or House

Remodeling frequently grows out of a decision to redecorate. An interior decorator sometimes is the one who initiates the remodeling idea and so works closely with the client, the architect, and the contractor who completes the remodeling. In such a situation, an interior decorator usually has the greatest responsibility for overseeing the construction. With this added responsibility, the interior decorator must be sure that the remodeling will be what the decorator and client envisioned. How will that happen? By understanding architectural elevations and floor plans.

Download Blueprints

Whenever you need to practice reading blueprints or offer your clients new options, **http://www.eplans.com** is an excellent online source with a wide selection of blueprints in a variety of styles, including

- Bungalow
- Chateau
- Colonial
- Contemporary
- Country
- Craftsman
- European
- French country
- Mediterranean
- Neoclassical
- Prairie
- Ranch
- Split-level
- Tudor
- Victorian

You can view the blueprints online or download them. Each one has a variety of options to make your choices clear.

Architectural Drawings

An interior decorator communicates ideas to a client visually, using presentation boards with drawings, samples of materials and colors, and other items. In the same way, an architect communicates his or her ideas with a set of drawings. Some of these drawings are similar to those interior decorators use. Others are specifically architectural.

Exterior elevations, for example, are to the outside of the house walls what the interior decorator's interior elevations are to the inside walls. As shown in Figure 8, exterior elevations are drawings of an exterior view of the house. Usually, a complete set of such elevations is drawn to show all sides of the building. These drawings help decorators plan the window treatments with the understanding of exposure to the effects of the sun.

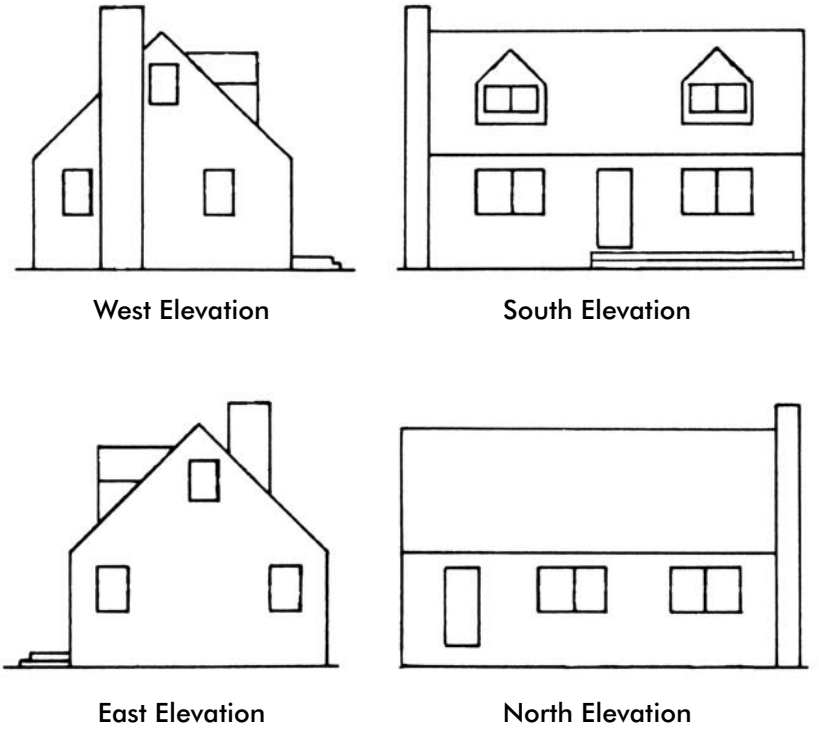


FIGURE 8—Exterior Elevations

An architect's *floor plan* shows the location of walls, doors, window openings, and corridors, along with the dimensions of each. A decorator needs a floor plan to lay out and plan all the furniture placement for future purchase.

Preliminary sketches are drawings made for a client's consideration, before final approval is granted to the plan. These sketches give a comprehensive view of the proposed floor plan, show elevations, and indicate where the house or room is to be located on the land site.

Specifications are the written descriptions of what's to be done. They're often referred to, casually, as *specs.* Specifications are attached to the final drawings, spelling out the agreement between the client and the contractor as to dimensions, materials to be used, and, literally, all other specifications of the job.

Blueprints, as you've already learned, are the working drawings on which contractors' bids are based. A blueprint is a copy of the architect's final drawing. It frequently contains a coded index to special symbols used in its preparation. As you'll see in Figures 9–12, however, much of reading blueprints involves simply knowing commonly used symbols. Even lines of different types have their own meanings.

Abbreviations are usually used in addition to symbols. A list of typical abbreviations found on architectural drawings is given in Figure 13. If uncommon abbreviations are used, look in one corner of the plan for a legend that explains abbreviations. To practice reading architectural drawings, study the symbols, lines, and abbreviations in Figures 9–13. Then, study Figure 14 and see how many symbols, lines, and abbreviations you can identify. Refer to Figures 9–13 to check yourself. Learning the meanings of these lines and symbols will prepare you to interpret blueprints properly.

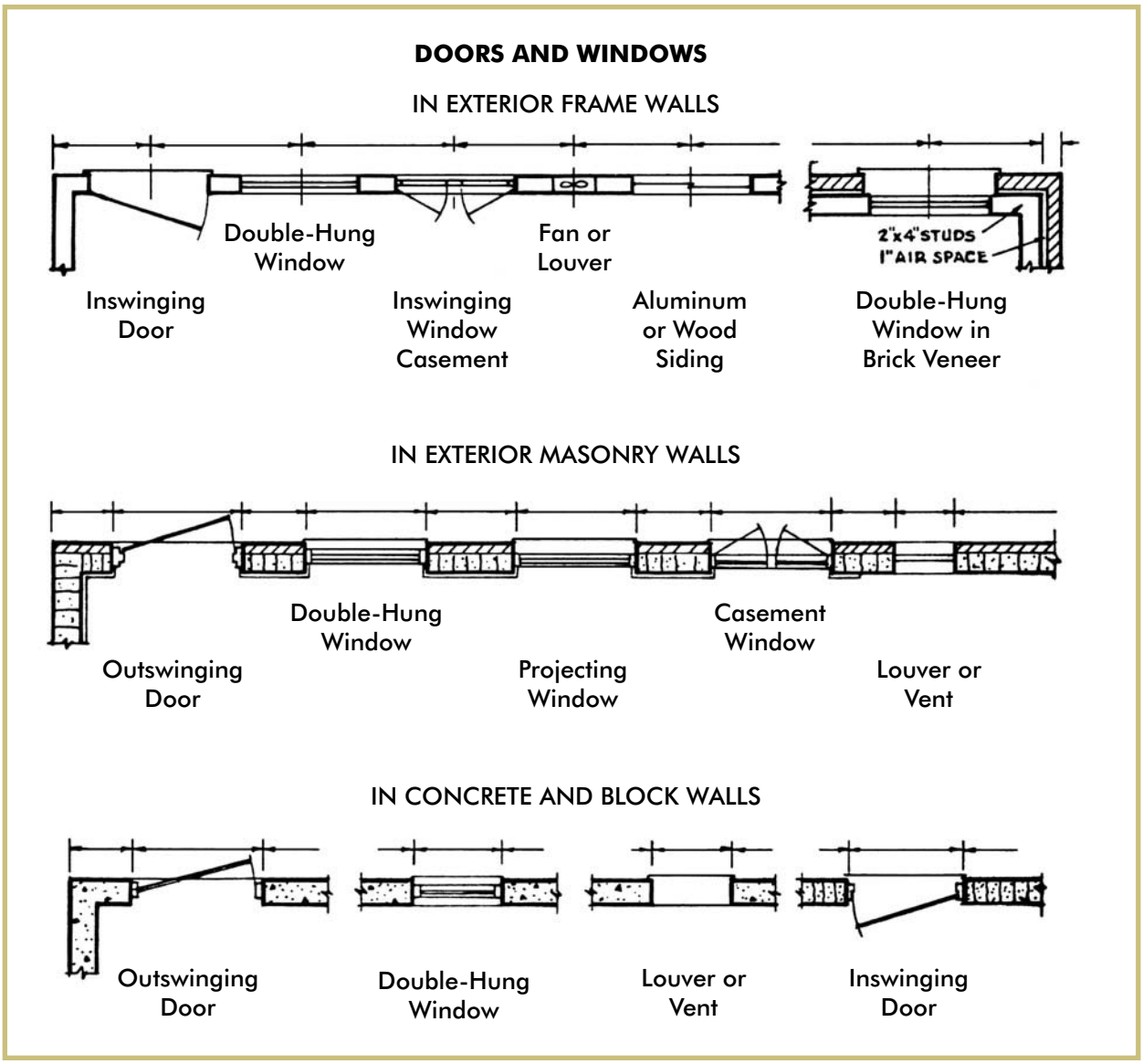


FIGURE 9—Architectural Symbols and Lines for Doors and Windows

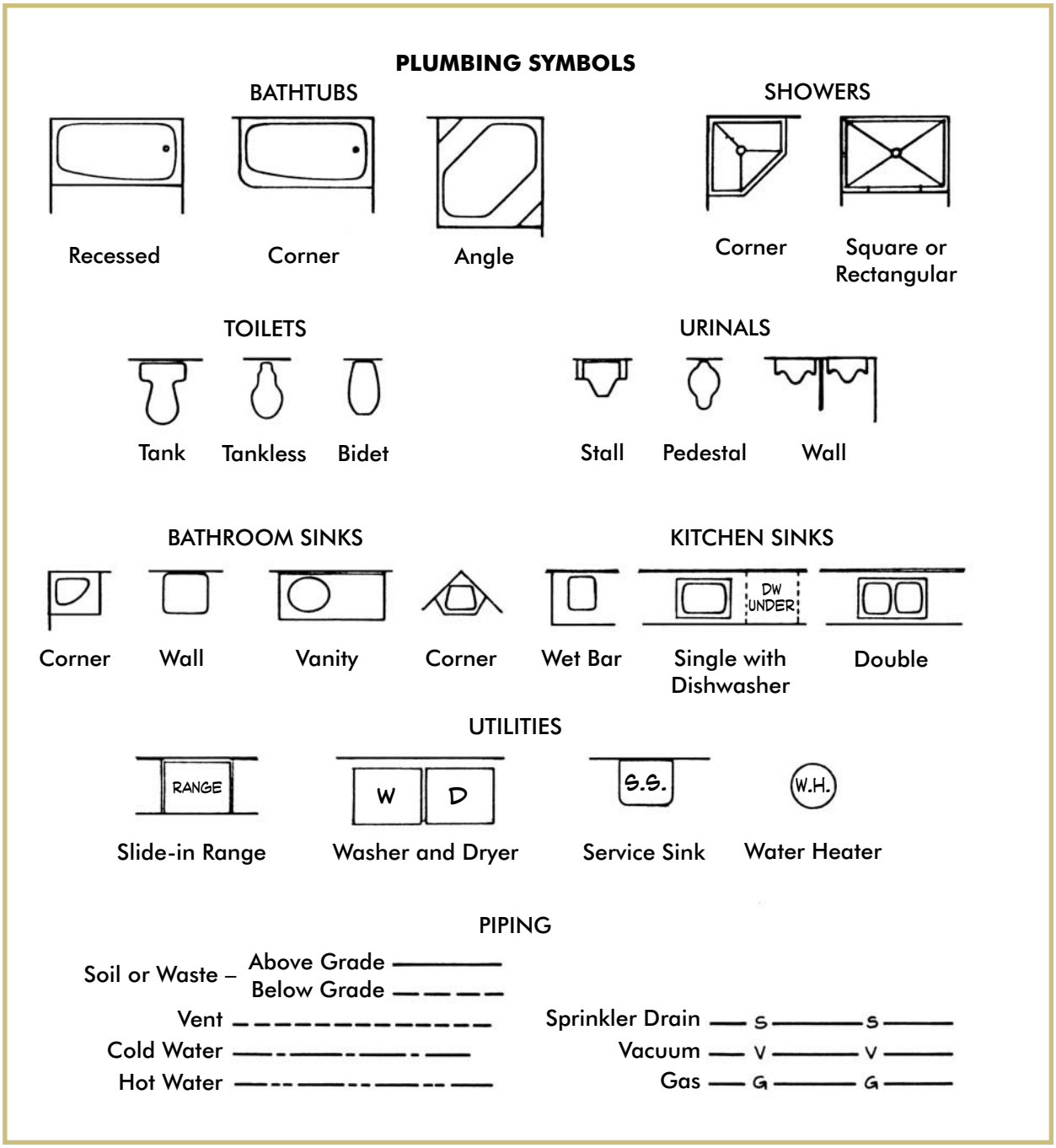


FIGURE 10—Architectural Symbols and Lines for Plumbing Fixtures and Pipes

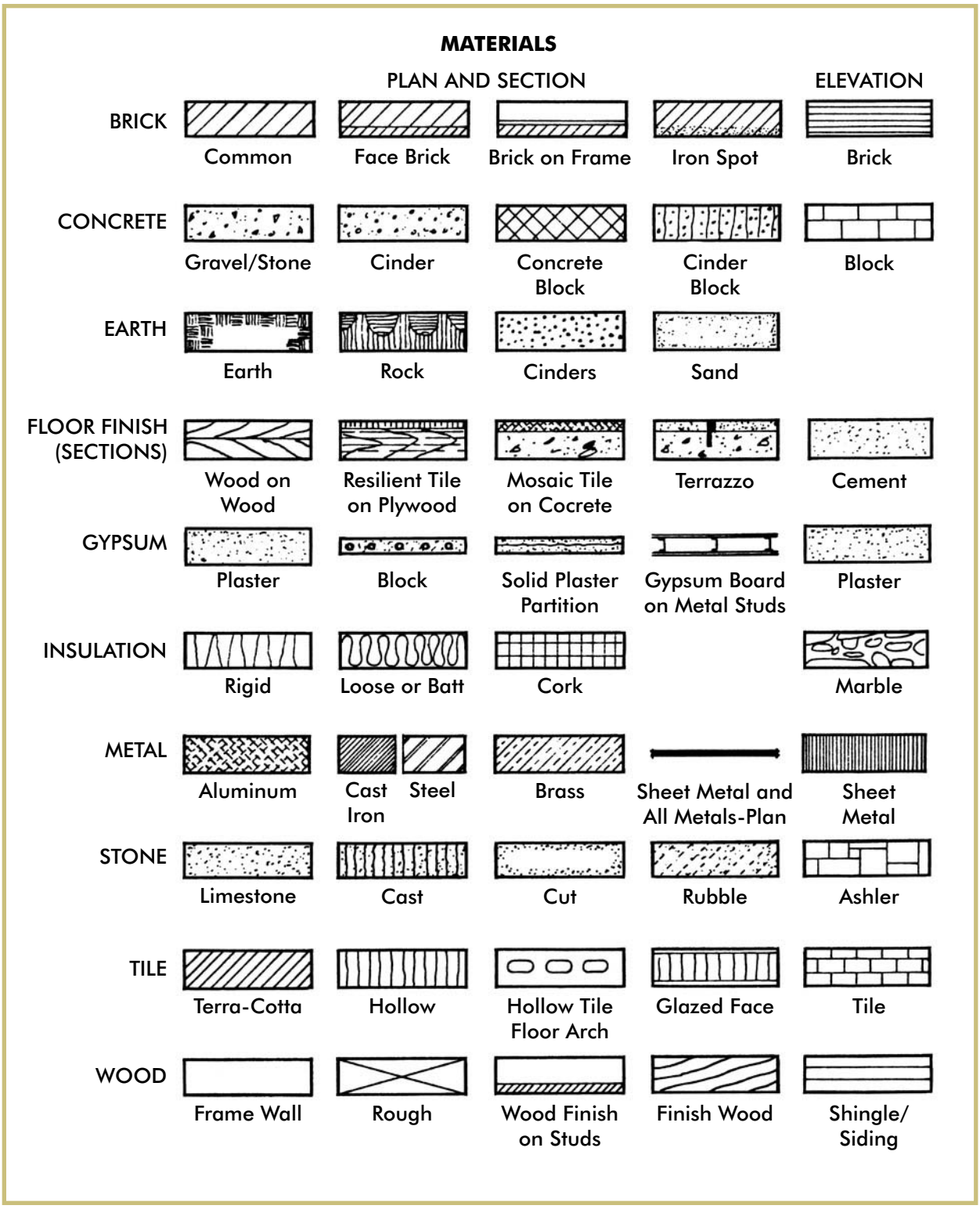


FIGURE 11—Architectural Symbols for Building Materials

FLOOR PLAN SYMBOLS AND LINE USAGE

1. Main Object Line

Thick line used to represent walls and other structural (load-supporting) elements of the plan

2. Dimension Line

Thin line used with a numerical dimension and arrows or slash marks to provide size description

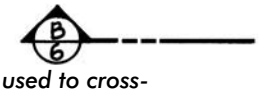
3. Extension Line

Thin line extended from dimension line to provide convenient place to write dimension figures

4. Equipment Line

Medium-thick line used to show nonstructural items such as plumbing fixtures, furnaces, water heaters; also used for doors, windows, and cabinetry

5. Symbol Section Line



Symbol and broken line used to cross-reference to a separate drawing showing a different view of the same area (Typically, this different view is an elevation.)

6. Section Line

Thin line used to indicate the area that's shown in a different view on another drawing

7. Invisible Line

Medium-thick dashed line used to show objects above or below the floor plan viewing plane

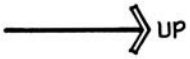
8. Center Line

Thin broken line used to show center of element, usually wall

9. Broken Line

Thin line used to indicate that a portion of a drawing isn't shown

10. Stair Indicator



Arrow used to show the direction of ascent or descent of stairs or steps

11. Phantom Line

Thin broken line used to show the position of stationary, non-fixed elements such as attic access, non-built-in appliances, and movable walls and screens

12. Window and Door Reference Symbols

Symbols used in conjunction with numerals or letters to provide identification and cross-reference to specific window and door information usually found in a separate schedule

ELECTRICAL FITTINGS

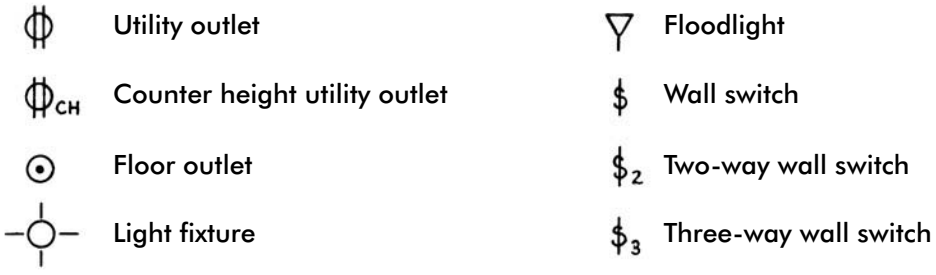


FIGURE 12—Architectural Symbols and Lines for Floor Plans

Common Architectural Abbreviations

Alternate	ALT	Hundred	C
Aluminum	ALUM	I beam	I
American Institute of Architects	A.I.A.	Insulate or insulation	INS
Board	BD	Interior	INT
Building	BLDG	Joist and plank (lumber designation)	J & P
Building line	BL	Kiln dried	KD
Cast iron	CI	Laundry	LAU
Ceiling	CLG	Lavatory	LAV
Center line	CL or $\overline{C}$	Medicine cabinet	MC
Center to center	C to C	Modular	MOD
Cleanout	CO	Molding	MLD
Column	COL	Plaster	PLAS or PL
Composition	COMP	Plate	PL or $\overline{P}$
Concrete	CONC	Plywood	PWD
Diameter	DIA(M)	Refrigerator	REFR
Dimension	DIM	Riser	R
Ditto	DO or ″	Room	RM
Divided or division	DIV	Rubber	R
Door	DR	Single-strength grade B glass	SSB
Double	DBL	Standard	STD
Double-hung window	DHW	Telephone	TEL
Downspout	DS	Temperature	TEMP
Enclosure	ENCL	Terra-cotta	TC
Entrance	ENT	Thousand	M
Exterior	EXT	Threshold	THR
Finish	FIN	Tread	T or TR
Flashing	FLG	Unfinished	UNFIN
Floor	FL	Ventilation	VENT
Footing	FTG	Wainscot	WAIN
Foundation	FDN	Water closet	WC
Galvanized iron	GI	Water heater	WH
Glass	GL	Waterproof or waterproofing	WP
Height	HGT		
Hexagonal	HEX		

FIGURE 13—Abbreviations in Architectural Drawings

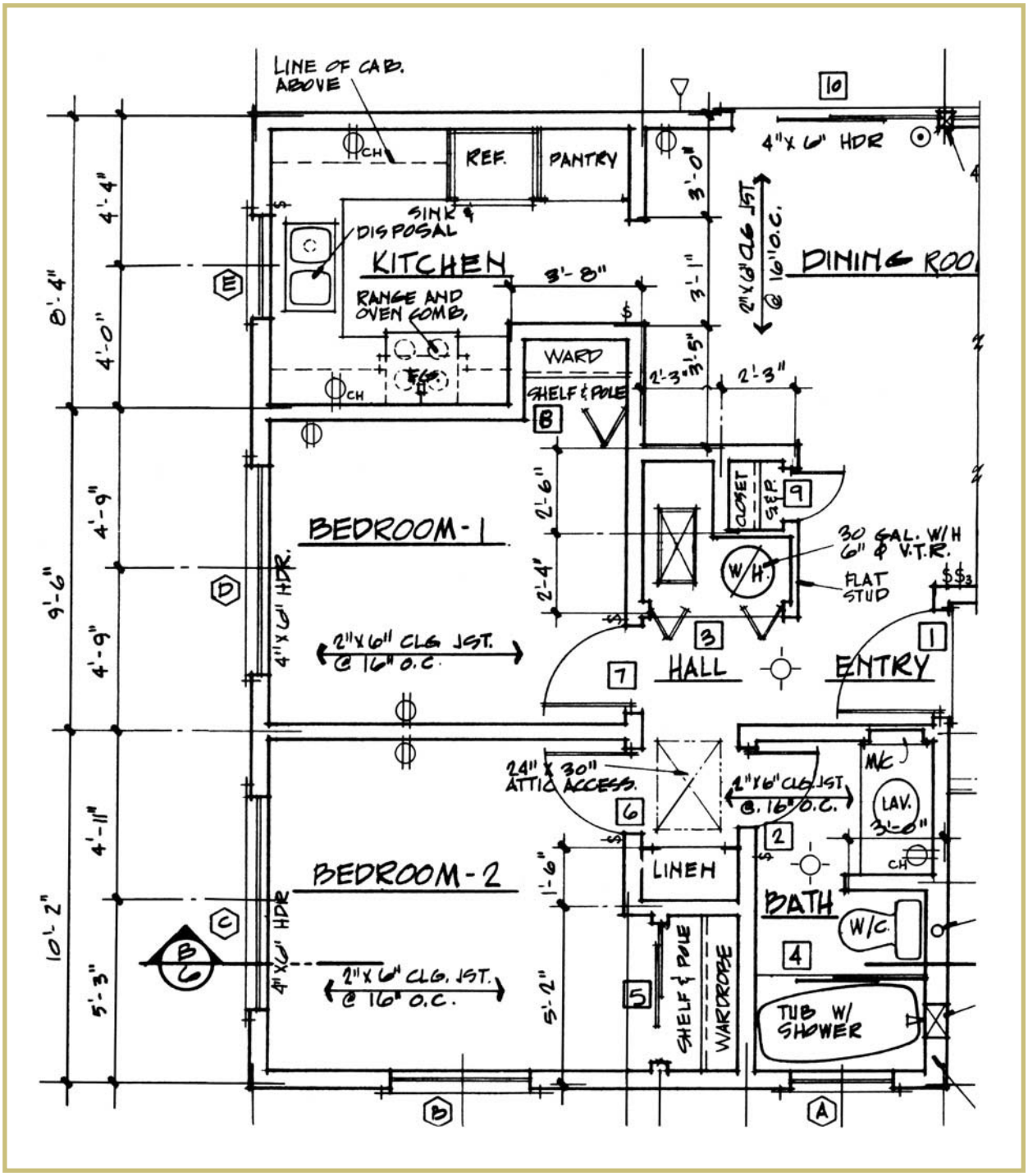


FIGURE 14—How many symbols, lines, and abbreviations can you identify in this architectural drawing?

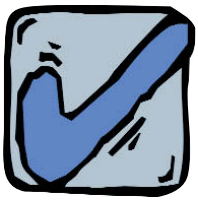
Look for Usable Space

Always keep in mind that contractors' blueprints indicate the actual sizes of the rooms. That's not the same as "usable space." In most cases, furniture can't be pushed snugly up against the walls. Closets, doors, and windows also have to be taken into account. Unless you learn to look for usable space, it's easy to end up with furniture that seems to fit on the blueprint, but won't fit in the room!

Getting a Feel for the Space

Interior designer Deborah Burnett suggests using an electrical cord to measure a room. Instead of simply picturing the furniture in the room, lay the cord out on the lawn and walk into the space. This approach will give you more of a feel for how much space is actually in the room when the furniture is in it.

In the next section of this study unit, you'll explore types of house plans. Before going on to that material, please complete *Self-Check 1.*



Self-Check 1

At the end of each section of *Decorating from Building Plans,* you'll be asked to pause and check your understanding of what you've just read by completing a "Self-Check" exercise. Answering these questions will help you review what you've studied so far. Please complete *Self-Check 1* now.

1. An architect's written descriptions of what's to be done are known as _____.

2. *True or False?* An interior decorator can work on the site of a builder's development.

3. A copy of an architect's final drawing is known as a _____.

4. _____ are higher-quality versions of standard options offered by builders.

5. _____ sketches are drawn for the client's consideration, before approval is given for the plan.

6. *True or False?* As a decorator, you should be strongly involved in the relationship between your client and the builder.

7. Two-dimensional sketches of the outside walls prepared by an architect are called _____.

Check your answers with those on page 63.

TYPES OF HOUSE PLANS

Once you've learned to read blueprints, you're ready to look at house plans with an eye to interior decorating considerations. First, you'll come to recognize some typical plans and will be immediately conscious of their most obvious merits and disadvantages. Each plan raises different questions of traffic flow, storage needs, and other factors that affect decorating plans. To read the floor plans presented in this section, first consult the legend in Figure 15 for a list of abbreviations used in the illustrations. Also, keep in mind that the plans shown aren't architectural drawings. They're simple presentation drawings, used here to analyze various floor plans.

Abbreviation	Meaning	Abbreviation	Meaning
LR	Living Room	B	Bath
FR	Family Room	K	Kitchen
BR	Bedroom	V	Vestibule
DR	Dining Room	CL	Closet
U	Utility Room	G	Garage

FIGURE 15—Floor Plan Legend

One-Story Plans

A one-story home has the advantage of no stairs to climb. How well the plan functions, however, depends on its specific shape in relation to the client's needs. One-story plans fall into four categories.

Rectangular plan. A common type of one-story home is based on a simple *rectangular plan* (Figure 16). This plan has a minimum of exterior walls, and the plumbing needs aren't concentrated in the same area. That is, the two rooms that require plumbing (the kitchen and the bathroom) are in different areas of the home. The rectangular plan has many variations, some that may include a garage and additional bedrooms.

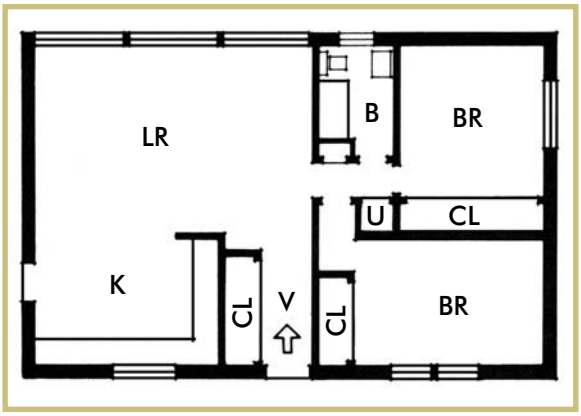


FIGURE 16—This rectangular plan has two bedrooms and a bathroom on the right, and an entrance, a living room, and a kitchen on the left.

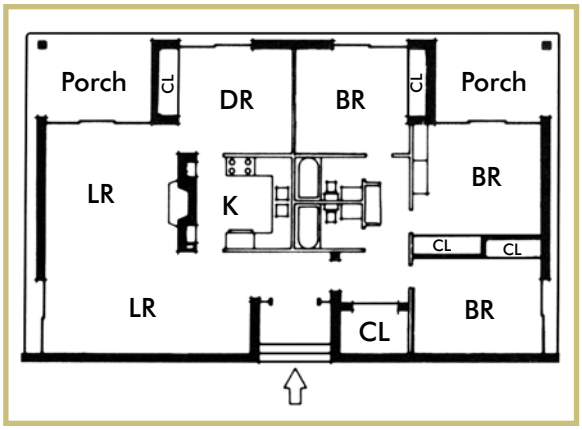
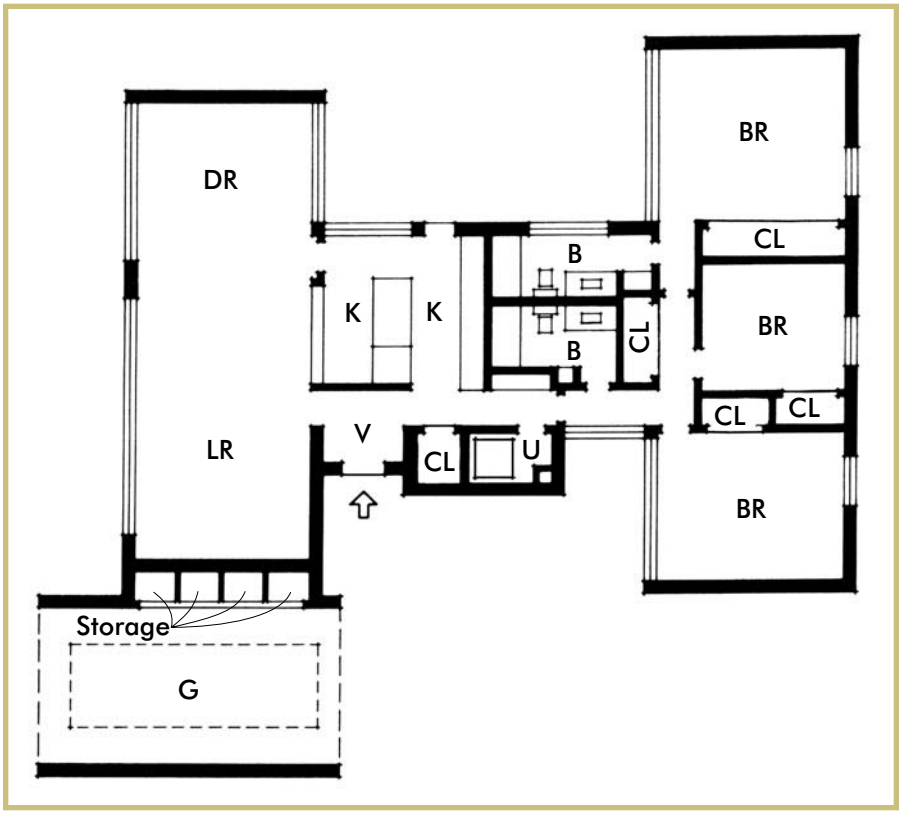


FIGURE 17—In the utility-core plan, the rooms that require plumbing are concentrated in the center of the building.

Utility-core plan. A *utility-core plan* (Figure 17) concentrates all utilities in one area. This plan decreases the installation and maintenance problems and expenses of those utilities. But providing good traffic circulation and separation can be a problem if the house isn't well planned.

Two variations of the utility-core plan are the H plan and the U plan. The *H plan* (Figure 18) requires long hallways and large exterior wall surfaces, but the three areas (sleeping, living, and kitchen/bathroom) are very effectively separated. The *U plan* (Figure 19) gives easy access from the kitchen or the bedrooms to the family room.

FIGURE 18—In the H plan, the utilities are concentrated in the center area, but there's better separation of the areas than in the previous plans.



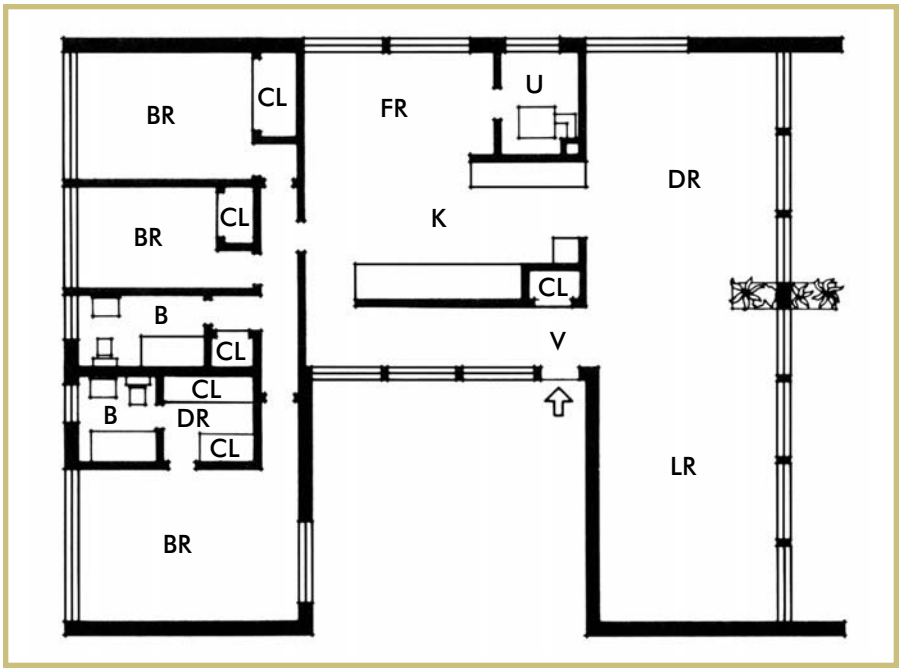


FIGURE 19—Study the circulation and traffic lanes in this U plan to see how well this plan works. The kitchen acts as the control center for the house, an important consideration when there are young children in the family.

T and L plans. Two other types of one-story plans are the *T plan* (Figure 20) and the *L plan* (Figure 21), which are more flexible and provide better separation of the three major areas. However, the cost is greater because they have more exterior wall surface and irregular roofs. Both of these plans can be adapted for more bedroom units.

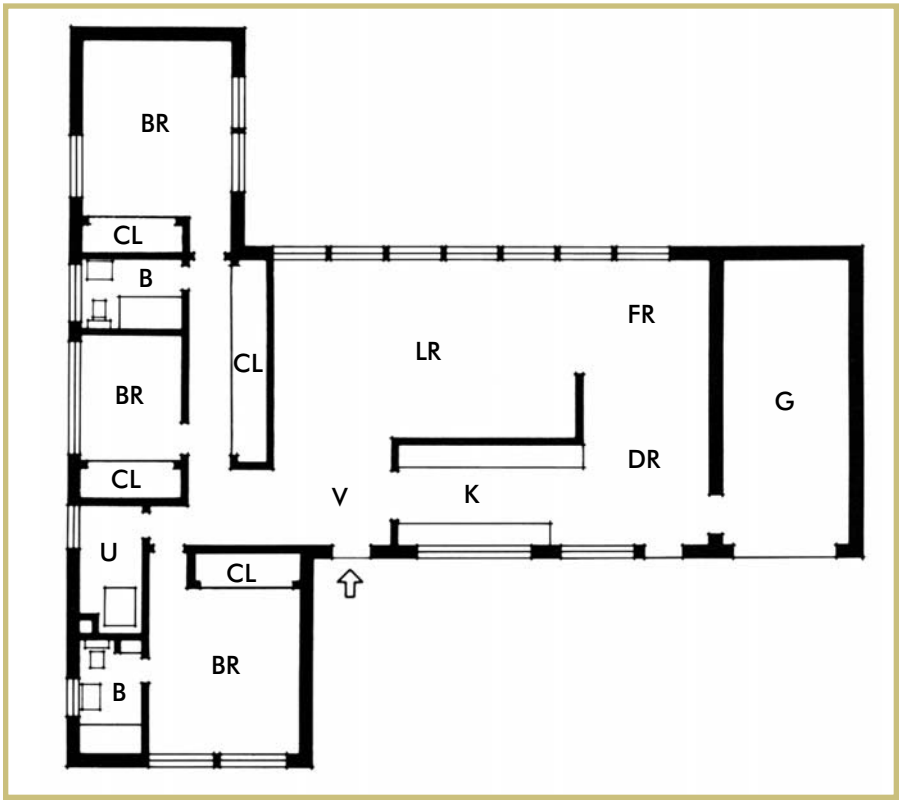
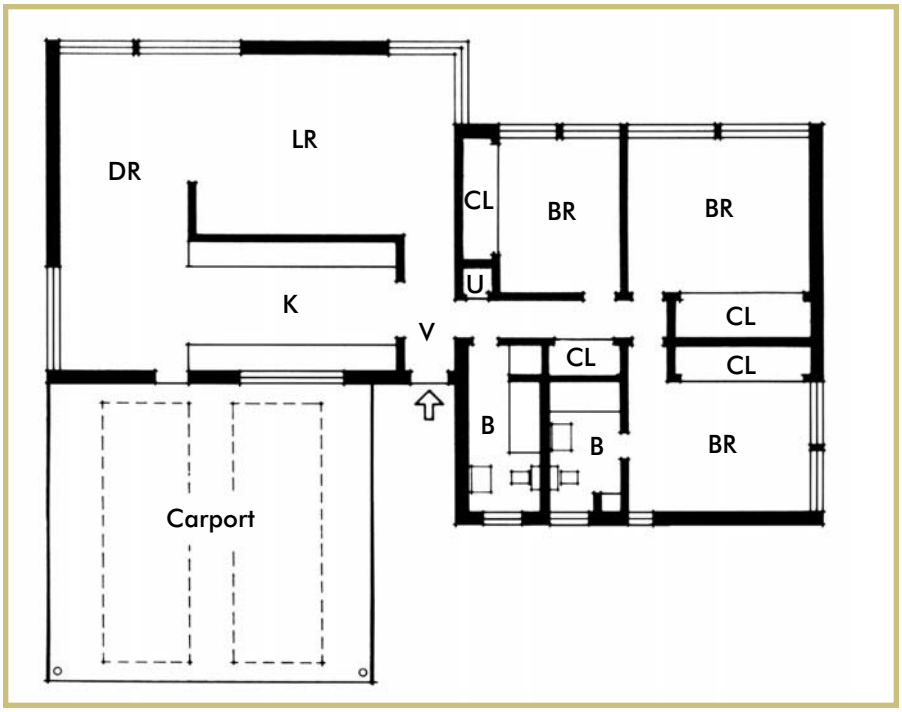


FIGURE 20—In a T plan the living and sleeping areas are well separated.

FIGURE 21—The three major areas—living, sleeping, and working—are separated in this L plan.



Inner-court plan. The *inner-court plan* (Figure 22) has been popular since ancient Egyptian times. In this plan, the house completely surrounds a central courtyard, or *atrium.* This plan works very well in cities where privacy is needed and where there's little room for outdoor living. A disadvantage is that any gardening needs or refuse from the courtyard must be carried through the house.

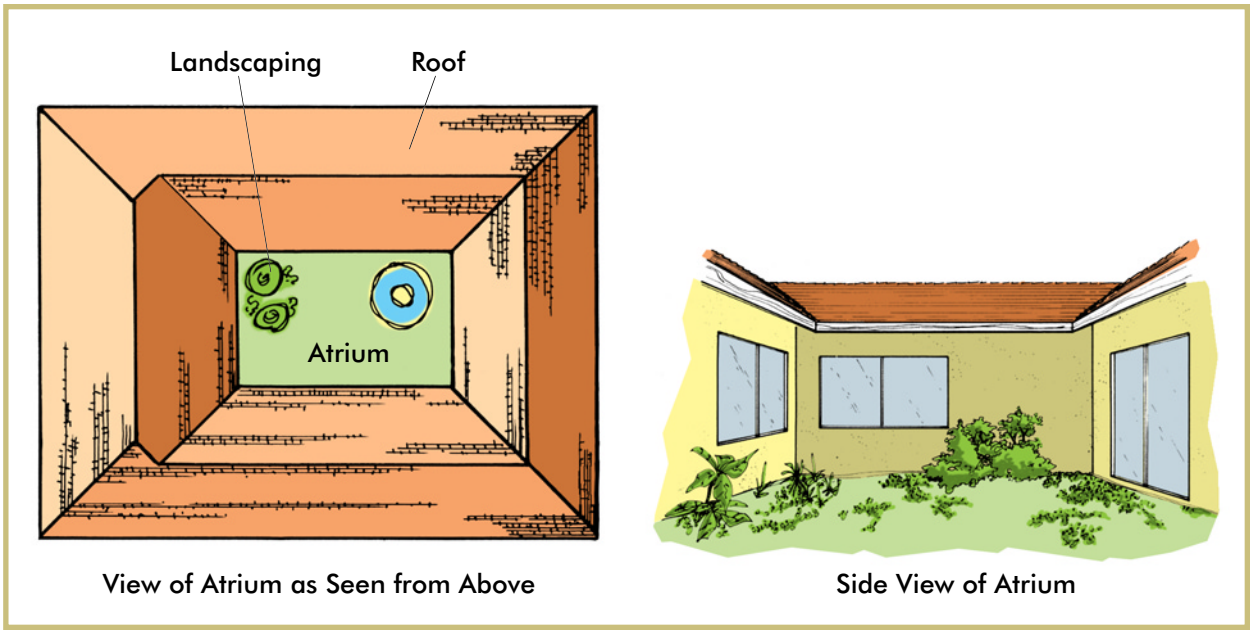


FIGURE 22—The atrium of an inner-court plan is completely surrounded by the home.

Two-Story Plans

Homes with two or more stories have one distinct advantage: the areas of the house are separated by an entire floor, not just by walls. Fewer problems exist in providing appropriate privacy and quiet for bedrooms and study. In addition, the home usually provides more storage space than a typical single-story plan does.

Multistory houses on hillsides generally have a variation of the typical two-story plan. Houses built on the up side of a hill, with the entry and living room at street level, usually follow the typical two-story arrangement, with living room, kitchen, and dining room on the lower level and bedrooms above. When the house is located on the down side of the hill, with the entrance at street level, the bedrooms are typically located below the living areas.

Split-Level Plans

Split-level houses are popular throughout the country. They combine the features of both one- and two-story houses. A typical split-level is in three levels, with the living, dining, and kitchen areas housed on a middle level, and the garage and sleeping areas housed on the bottom and top levels, respectively. Figure 23 illustrates a typical split-level house.

FIGURE 23—Split-Level House

Although split-level houses were originally designed for sloping lots, they're now often built on level ground. This type of plan doesn't have the stairless convenience of a one-story house, but it doesn't require as much vertical travel as a multistory house. Also, split-level houses don't require lots as large as those need for one-story houses. Sometimes the traffic circulation—for example, from the work area to the front door—is less than ideal. However, split-level homes have the advantage of being able to concentrate the plumbing in one area level for economy.

Evaluating Floor Plans

As you've already learned, the key element to a successful floor plan is good traffic patterns. Ideally, the main entry allows people access to various rooms in the house without requiring them to pass through other rooms. The traffic pattern should flow freely and easily from room to room. Also, the distance between related rooms (for example kitchen and dining room, guest room and guest bathroom) should be minimal.

When examining floor plans, look for the three basic activity zones—living, sleeping, and working zones. Then ask yourself if these areas relate well to each other?

The *living zone* includes the living room, dining room, breakfast room, and any outdoor deck or patio. It also might include a family room, media room, health and workout center, music room, art studio, and so on. The best living zone is grouped together in one general area that's easily accessible from the entry. Living zones are often placed near the back of the house to avoid street noises and to provide privacy.

The *sleeping zone* includes all bedrooms and their related bathrooms. Each bedroom should have access to a bathroom. The best sleeping zone buffers bedrooms from noise by separating adjoining bedrooms with closets or bathrooms.

The *working zone* includes the kitchen, work area, entry, and garage. It's usually the noisiest part of the house. Therefore, it should be as far away from the living and sleeping zones as possible. If the house is a two-story house, there should be at least a half bath in or near the working zone.

The floor plan in Figure 24 has the three zones that are quite well organized. The living zone includes the living room, den, dining room, and patio. The working zone isn't ideal, since the carport is separate from the kitchen and utility room. Although packages can't be conveniently transported from the carport to the kitchen, the parking area near the entrance (see arrow) provides easy transport to the kitchen area.

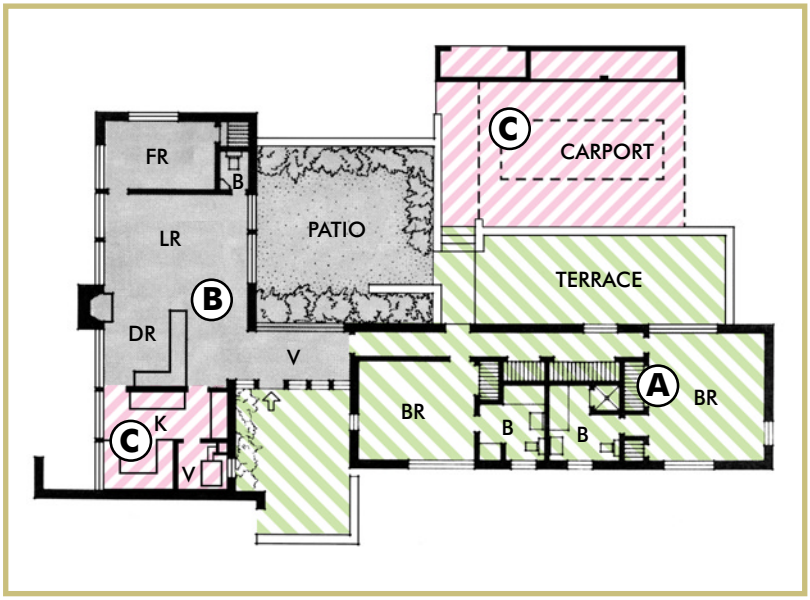


FIGURE 24—This floor plan shows (A) the sleeping area, (B) living area, and (C) working area of this home.

Let's consider some specific factors to consider when evaluating floor plans.

Entry. The main entry is the first thing your client's guests will see. For that reason, it needs to be a well-defined space (Figure 25). Ask yourself questions like these:

- Does the entry lead directly to the living area?
- Is it private enough for your client to accept deliveries without having to display the whole house?
- Will it withstand heavy wear?
- Does it contain a sizable closet?

FIGURE 25—This entryway provides privacy for people in other areas of the house.

Kitchen. The overall shape of a kitchen doesn't matter, as long as it's laid out for ease of operation.

- Is there easy access between the refrigerator, stove, and sink?
- When the refrigerator door is open, does it interfere with traffic or with access to the stove or sink?
- Is the dishwasher near the sink? (See Figure 26.)
- Is there counter space on both sides of the sink and on at least one side of the stove and refrigerator?
- Is there a tall closet for storing large cleaning tools?
- Does the kitchen have lots of counter and cupboard space? (See Figure 27.)
- If the kitchen has a pass-through to other areas of the house, have provisions been made for closing it off to hide a messy kitchen?

FIGURE 26—A dishwasher placed near the sink makes it convenient for loading dirty dishes.

FIGURE 27—This kitchen has more than ample counter space, the dishwasher is near a sink, and there's counter space on both sides of each sink.

As a decorator, you'll be expected to make selections for countertops, cabinets, appliances, flooring, wallcovering and window treatments, as well as furniture and accessories. At this point—before the house is built—you should specify materials that blend with your planned decor. Now is the time when it will cost the least to coordinate them properly.

Bedrooms. Bedrooms need special consideration because people want quiet when they're in these room.

- Are there sound barriers between bedrooms?
- Is there ample closet space?
- Are at least two walls free of windows or doors so you can leave some flexibility when arranging furnishings?
- Is there ample work or play space?
- Are there enough electrical outlets for lamps, televisions, clocks, and other such devices?
- Are doors located so you don't have to cross the main part of the room to reach the closets or bathroom?
- Does the bathroom have heating, ventilation, and proper lighting?

Floor Plans for Special Needs

If your client is sight impaired or uses a wheelchair or a walker, you must consider these factors when evaluating the floor plan of the room. If your client is sight impaired, additional lighting is needed, and the passageways must be unobstructed. The standards for accessibility are issued by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). The code is listed under ANSI A117.1, which is the national standard for buildings and facilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) follows the guidelines of the ANSI A117.1 building codes. These standards include placement of lighting fixtures, heights of counters and cabinets, heights and positions of plumbing fixtures, and doorway widths.

For example, a residential home built for a client in a wheelchair should have hallway widths of 36 in. (91 cm), door openings of 32 in. (81 cm), and a turnaround space of 5 ft (150 cm) in any room used by the person in the wheelchair (Figure 28). Door handles specifically designed for easy use by a wheelchair-bound person are necessary for easy access.

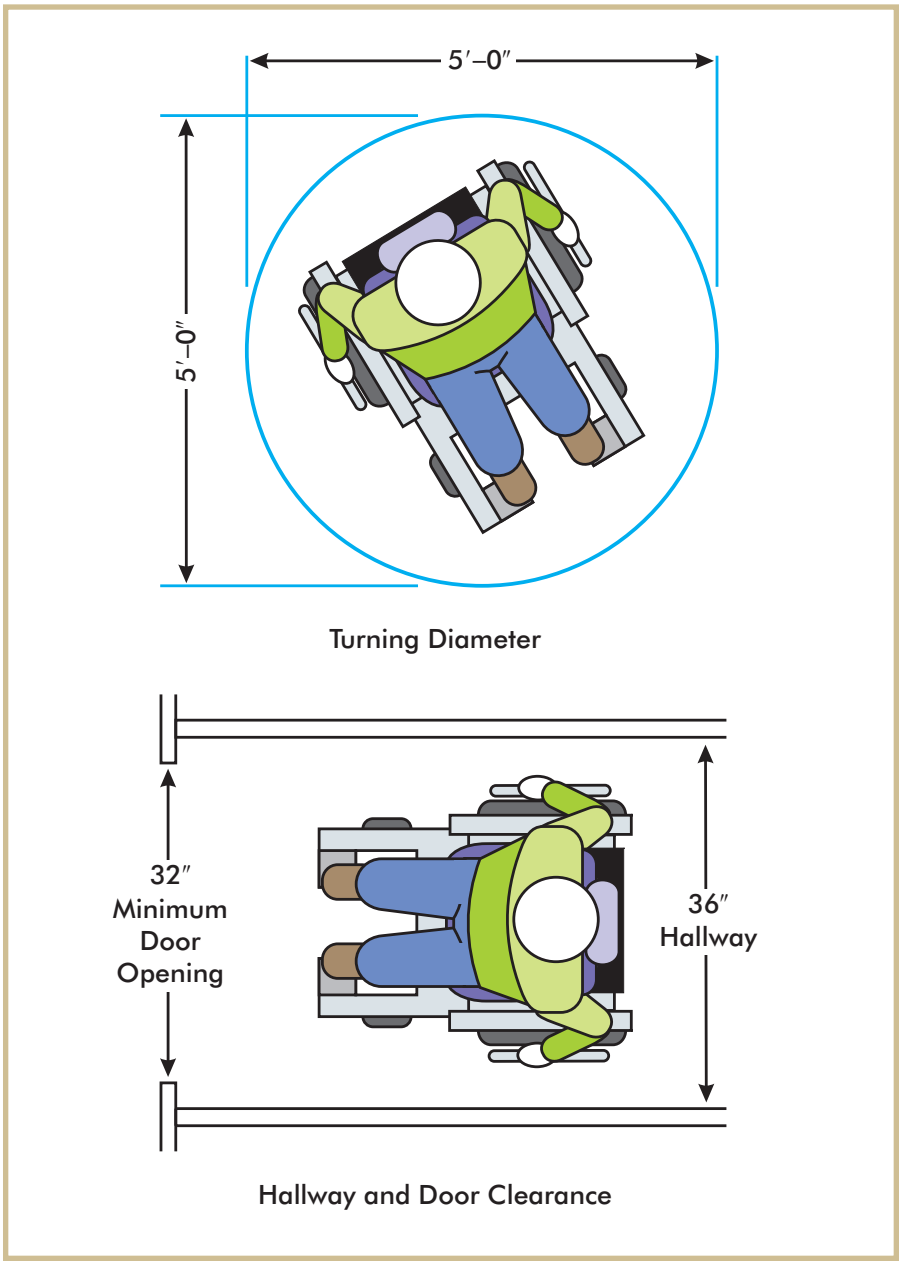


FIGURE 28—These drawings illustrate turning diameter and clearances for a wheelchair.

Today's choices for special needs include higher cabinets for ease of use for the elderly—to eliminate the need for bending low or kneeling on the floor.

You've probably noticed how much larger toilet stalls are for the handicapped in public bathrooms. The height of the toilet is lower, and the space of the toilet stall is large enough for easy entering and exiting. The toilet and sink are often hung on the wall so that the wheelchair fits under the sink and provides more clear space for turning around. Building code requires a free space of 5 ft (150 cm) in diameter for a wheelchair to turn around.

The codes mentioned in this section pertain only to the United States. You should obtain a copy of these regulations whenever and wherever you're working with a handicapped client so you can provide for his or her needs. Be sure the contractor or architect is aware of any physical needs of your client has or of any other person who will live in or visit the home.

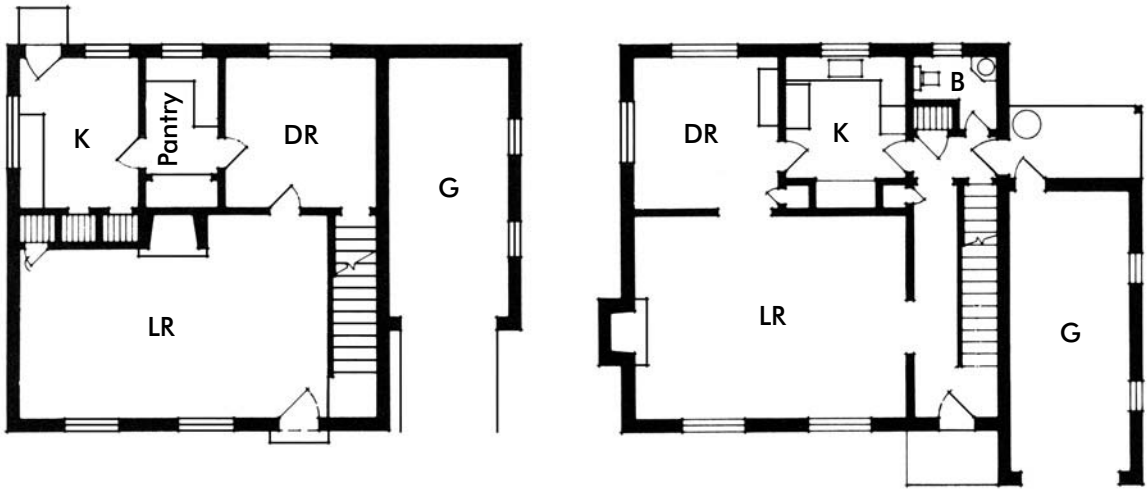
In the next section, you'll examine problems and solutions for specific rooms in a home. Before going on, please complete *Self-Check 2.*

Self-Check 2

1. Study the house plans labeled Plan A and Plan B. Pay particular attention to the traffic patterns. Which of these two house plans has a more practical layout? Which requires special consideration in choice of flooring materials? Explain your answer.

   _____

   _____



Plan A Plan B

2. A home built for a client in a wheelchair should have doorway widths of _____ in. (_____ cm).

3. What is the greatest advantage of a one-story house plan?

   _____

4. What are the three basic activity zones on a floor plan?

   _____

Check your answers with those on page 63.

ROOM BY ROOM—PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Whether you're looking at floor plans, at a room with an eye to remodeling, or at a room that requires only simple decorating, you should always approach the project as a series of problems to be discovered and then solved. Does this approach make decorating a grim, joyless job? Not at all. It simply means that you must learn to develop an eye for the challenges to be solved in any decorating job. When you think in terms of problem solving, your decorating plan will have purpose and direction. You'll be assuring that you're doing what you should be doing above all—providing for the needs of your client.

Let's take a look now at some potential problems and solutions, most particularly in those areas of the home that we haven't yet discussed very much.

Kitchens

Kitchens generally adhere to one of the typical floor plans shown in Figure 29, because the kitchen must be functional. Very specific chores are performed in the kitchen, and everyone uses a kitchen in the same essential way. Everyone's kitchen contains the same basic appliances and furnishings.

Kitchen functions are performed best if the kitchen is arranged in a one of the ways illustrated in Figure 29. Any kitchen plan that deviates too much from these will probably present serious functional problems. Even using one of these efficient floor plans and making it much larger than customary turns it into a less efficient plan by making it necessary to walk greater distances between work areas.

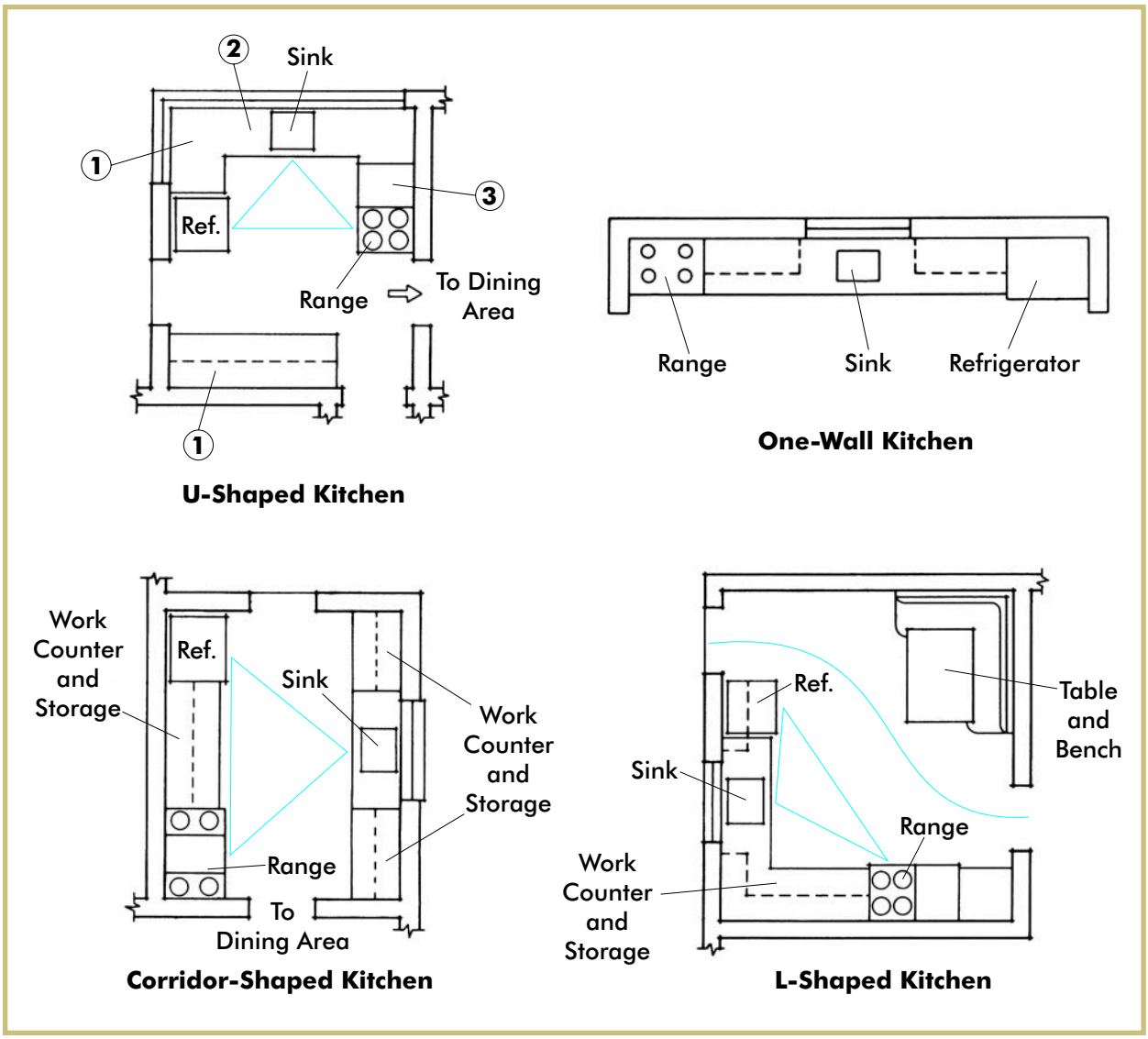


FIGURE 29—Most kitchens are arranged according to one of these plans.

In the U-shaped plan, food is delivered to Area 1, where it's stored for future use in Area 2. It's then moved to Area 3 for cooking, and finally served in the nearby dining area. The one-wall kitchen has limited storage and counter space, but it does meet all of the requirements of a functional kitchen. In addition, the plan presents no inconveniences with through traffic.

The corridor-shaped kitchen is generally used when only a long, narrow space is available. Because the area is so compact, through traffic can interfere with the work areas. In the

L-shaped kitchen, the reception-preparation-cooking-serving sequence works quite well. Traffic can move through the kitchen without interfering with the work area.

Builders today know that an appealing kitchen (that is, one that's well planned for the convenience of those using it) will frequently be an important factor in helping to sell a home. Therefore, well-laid-out kitchens are the rule rather than the exception in present-day building. Even so, a particular kitchen may present problems related specifically to your client's lifestyle. You may also encounter problems that exist in an older kitchen in need of remodeling. Some older custom homes were built before there was an awareness of good kitchen planning, and before new appliances changed patterns of food preparation and serving.

When planning or remodeling a kitchen, be sure to consider the height of the work surfaces. Typically, the tops of kitchen counters, stoves, and sinks are 36 in. (91 cm) from the floor. This height is comfortable for most people. However, if your clients are unusually tall, they might want to consider having surfaces raised to 40 in. (102 cm). This solution is a possibility, but it's also a potential problem. When you think of making alterations such as this one, you must also consider how they'll affect the resale value of the home.

Chances are slim that a couple who stand 6 ft or taller will happen to sell their home to a couple of similar height. More likely the 5 ft 3 in. prospective buyer will turn down the house because of the awkward height of the counters. So, for your clients' sake, advise against any alterations that would customize the home in a way that would make it unsuitable for use by others.

Other kitchen aids that have a general appeal would be considered an asset when a house is offered for resale. For example, the top shelves in any kitchen cabinets are awkward to reach for almost anyone. A short client will find it a nuisance to bring out a folding kitchen ladder each time he or she wants to reach upper shelves (assuming there's a

convenient place to store a ladder nearby). Therefore, a convenience you might suggest would be to build a fold-out, one-step stool into the bottom shelf of floor-level cabinets to provide convenient access to top shelves. This feature would serve your client well and would be attractive to future prospective buyers of the home. If a future owner preferred to have the added storage space in the cabinets, it would be a simple matter to remove the stools.

Another addition that would appeal to most homeowners is extra storage space. Figure 30 illustrates a clever storage addition.

FIGURE 30—Shelves above the sink provide additional storage space. (Reprinted with permission from Country Floors)

So, consider the general appeal of any building or improvements you might recommend. If the change isn't one that would appeal to other people as well as to the client, don't recommend the change unless it can be easily removed.

Another factor you should consider when you're helping to plan a kitchen is the view that the room affords. What view will the kitchen (and other rooms) provide? This question is important when a client is purchasing a home under construction in a new development. The model home may sit in solitary splendor, its every window facing an appealing rustic

scene. However, that won't necessarily be the case with homes built side by side on small lots. Frequently, the kitchen ends up facing an all-too-close neighbor's home. Check the plans to determine what the views will be from each window after all homes are built.

Even if your client has no interest in gardening, a kitchen greenhouse window can be an attractive solution to a window with a problem view. Many builders offer such windows as options. (In other parts of the home, stained-glass windows or screening should be planned for such situations.)

Will the client use the kitchen for more than food preparation? Given a typically small kitchen, how do you solve the space problem if your client wants a communications center, or just a place to sit down with a cup of coffee and a recipe book? In many families, the kitchen serves as the place of message taking and message giving, as well as a center of check writing and letter writing. It may even contain an intercom system for notifying family members in other rooms that dinner is ready.

What's in the Ultimate Kitchen?

If you're wondering what the true gourmet would like in the ultimate kitchen, these are the appliances that come out at the top of every must-have list:

- A 48 in. Wolf commercial-strength gas range, with a full oven, four gas burners, and a griddle with a cover that can be closed to create extra workspace
- A stainless steel, Sub-Zero refrigerator
- A Fisher & Paykel dishwasher with a gentle bath for stemware in one drawer and a power-scrubber for pots and pans in the other

The only question remaining is whether or not your clients think they've "gotta have it"—and, of course, if they can afford it.

If space is too limited to provide room for a desk and a communication system (for example, a bulletin board or dry erase board) within the kitchen, it may be desirable to give up some closet space to build one. Most contemporary kitchens contain at least one tall, deep closet or cabinet unit. How much use you can make of this space may depend in part on whether there's an attached garage with direct access to the kitchen or simply an open carport. If the garage is handy to the kitchen area, consider adding some storage shelves and wall hooks in the garage to hold some canned foods and cleaning supplies. Using the garage for this type of storage frees kitchen cabinet space for conversion to a communications center (Figure 31).

FIGURE 31—Because this kitchen is large and has a great deal of storage space, the decorator was able to allot space for a communications center.

For the client with a small kitchen and a desire to sit down in the kitchen from time to time, the solution may again depend on what surrounds the kitchen. Does the kitchen open to a dining area? Is there space right at the kitchen door to keep a bar stool? Will it be convenient to roll that stool around the corner to a kitchen counter when desired?

If a bar stool would look out of place in the dining area, could a dining-height chair be stationed near the kitchen door instead? Or could a small butcher-block table on casters be tucked in a corner of the kitchen to be rolled out for use as a small table for coffee time?

Often, the solutions to problems like these depend on what's adjacent to the area in question (such as the attached garage or dining areas just discussed). Spaces should always be considered in relationship to each other, not as individual islands.

For example, suppose a floor plan shows that a dining area will be small or slightly awkward in shape. In this case, you may not wish to clutter the dining area with a buffet unit for storing dishes, silver, and linens. The logical place for these items is in the kitchen cabinets immediately adjacent to the dining area. Therefore, when you're planning the kitchen in this house, you must allow for the proper assortment of cabinets and shelves built at the dining room end of the kitchen for this purpose, or you may modify those already planned or existing. For example, nontarnish silver cloth could be fitted into the drawers and shelves planned to hold silver. If a drawer isn't available, silverware could be stored in silver-cloth-covered loops attached to the inside of a cabinet door, while hollowware could be stored on the shelves.

Solutions need not always be conventional. If a client likes to watch television in the kitchen but there's no counter space for a television, why not place a flat-panel TV on the wall?

If the kitchen plan shows limited cupboard space and your gourmet client has a lot of kitchenware, you'll need to think of making use of the walls and the ceiling. A decorative iron or wooden rack suspended from the ceiling may provide the answer in some cases (Figure 32). A length of chain links fitted with hooks can be suspended from the ceiling, in a corner, to hang pots and pans decoratively in an otherwise unused space.

FIGURE 32—These photos illustrate a clever way to provide extra storage space and make a decorative statement at the same time.

Shelves added to any open wall can help to relieve pressure on limited cupboard space. Cupboard space that's most often wasted is that just beneath the ceiling—the hard-to-get-at cabinets. If a client has a lot to store, he or she can put the least-often used items in those high cupboards. However, if a client's possessions will fit in the lower cabinets, some of the highest cabinet space frequently goes to waste. Consider what other uses may be made of this space, such as a wine rack.

An open-plan kitchen can be delightful for the outgoing client who has a casual lifestyle and likes to talk to guests while cooking. But an open-plan kitchen can pose a problem for the client who wants to engage in more formal entertaining. In such cases, the kitchen area—with its clutter from meal preparation—should be obscured from the dining area.

Above all, kitchens should be practical and as easy to maintain as possible. For this reason, it's not always most practical to select some of the more exciting-looking optional surfaces offered by a builder. What looks so cozy in the model homes may be a nuisance to maintain. Through good color choices and the use of good textural contrast in accessories, the plainest surfaces can be made to look lovely. Fancy tile with grouting to be kept clean, and slick surfaces to be kept polished, should be reserved for the client who really wants them—and will care for them.

Warming Drawers

One of the latest trends in kitchens and bathrooms is such a good idea that you wonder why someone didn't think of it before. Warming drawers for bathroom towels are at the cutting edge of home accessories. They're very easy to install in a vanity or cupboard. And few things feel more luxurious than a plush, warm towel when you come out of the shower.

Bathrooms

Function is the first consideration in planning bathrooms. Each bathroom in a house must be carefully planned for durability of materials and for best use of space. The bathroom needn't be a sterile, institutional-like place, however; it can be an attractive area in which to bathe, dress, and relax (Figure 33).

FIGURE 33—Even though a bathroom should be functional, it can also be a pleasant, relaxing place in any home, as shown in these photos.

Everything in a bathroom must be moisture-proof and mildew-proof, from the floor to the ceiling. For example, the floor can be ceramic tile, vinyl tile, or carpeting of man-made fibers such as nylon, polyester, or polypropylene. A large selection of moisture-resistant wallpapers, plastic laminates, ceramic and vinyl tile, and paint for the walls and counter-tops is currently available. The ceiling can be painted, wallpapered, or covered with water-resistant acoustic tiles to lessen noise.

What's New in Bathrooms?

At the front edge of elegance, Kohler is now offering what they call the Escale Suite bathroom. Strangely enough, it was inspired by the clean lines of Japanese ceramic tableware. While your clients may not be interested in buying the suite intact, some of the individual elements may intrigue them.

The line has a sleek, freestanding bath, a drop-in BubbleMassage with optional chromatherapy, and a range of basins, vanity tops and vessels. To see some of these pieces, visit **http://www.us.kohler.com.**

The minimum essentials for a family bathroom are a bathtub and/or shower, a *lavatory* (washbowl), and a *water closet* (toilet). Although these three pieces come in standard sizes with some variations, they can be used in various arrangements. The arrangements are somewhat limited by the location of water and waste pipes. In a two-story or split-level home, bathrooms are often arranged over each other or over other plumbing fixtures. If a single-story home, they're commonly placed back to back with other areas that use plumbing fixtures. Such arrangements are the most economical.

The bathtub and shower, traditionally of porcelain, are now being produced in a fiberglass unit that consists of tub, shower, walls, and ceiling. Look for other such innovations in fixture showrooms.

Air Baths

Showers have come a long way since our ancestors poured buckets of water over their heads. Today, steam showers and shower jet panels are extremely popular. The coming trend is likely to be the air bath, which offers tiny, effervescent bubbles instead of targeted jets. So much more soothing!

In addition to the three basic fixtures mentioned, many other luxury items can be installed if the client desires them. More and more builders offer some or all of these options. Here are a few examples:

- *Sauna* (Figure 34), which may be portable or permanently installed. A sauna consists of a wooden room with dry heat that opens the pores and eliminates toxins through perspiration.
- Massage table and/or massage equipment
- Sun and heat lamps
- *Bidet* (pronounced bih DAY) (Figure 35). A bidet is an open-seated bathroom stool with running water used for personal hygiene.
- *Jacuzzi* (Figure 36). This fixture is a tub usually large enough for more than one person. Users sit in the tub and are massaged by underwater jets.

FIGURE 34—Sauna

FIGURE 35—Bidet

FIGURE 36—Jacuzzi

Visit showrooms for an eye-opening look at the current trends in bathroom-fixture designs and to familiarize yourself with what's available.

If you're planning the complete renovation of a bathroom, check with a plumber for the feasibility of your client's ideas. Also check with an electrician to see what problems he or she may spot for wiring the lighting fixtures you select. Adequate lighting and electrical outlets are very important. Be sure there are enough electrical outlets for razors, sun lamps, heat lamps, and massage or other equipment that might be used in the bathroom. Hairdryers can be a hazard in the bathroom because of the nearby water; however, people continue to use them there. Plan to keep outlets as far as possible from the bathtub to discourage accidents.

If any young, elderly, or handicapped people are living in a home you're decorating, you should plan on a few extras in the bathroom. Grab handles (Figure 37) at the toilet and/or bath and nonslip surfaces in the tub and shower or on the floor are very important. It's also a good idea to add a stool to the tub, so that those who need a place to sit have it immediately at hand.

FIGURE 37—Grab handles near the toilet are a help to individuals who have difficulty getting up from a seated position.

Remember in your plans to consider ventilation, too. Exhaust fans will be needed in a bathroom if the window is small or if the bathroom has no window. Also consider whether additional heat will be needed in a cold climate—from a heat source that can be turned on or off as needed.

The key to basic bathroom planning of fixtures and appliances is to consult the expert bathroom planners, including plumbers and electricians. Their experience in the building areas will complement yours in the decorating area.

A combination tub and shower saves the most space. The combination fixture should always be enclosed so that water doesn't spray all over the rest of the bathroom. The best enclosures are vinyl shower curtains and glass or plastic sliding doors. Shower curtains come in all colors and many designs. A reversible one lets the person inside the tub or shower enjoy the design.

Bathroom basins are available in three styles—pedestal, wall-hung, and countertop (Figure 38). For plumbing purposes, all of them are attached to the wall in some way, but they create different decorative effects. Toilets, also, may be pedestal or wall-mounted. Of course, floor cleanup is made easier when fixtures are wall-mounted.

FIGURE 38—Bathroom basins are available in three styles: pedestal (A), wall-hung (B), and countertop (C).

How can you help your client who loves everything about her newly purchased Victorian home except the old, tired bathroom tub and sink? Instead of replacing the fixtures (which could be quite costly), you can suggest a paint job. Professional painters can paint the tub and sink with several coats of epoxy paint; it adheres to tile and porcelain and is faster and cheaper than porcelainizing or retiling.

Since bathrooms are generally the smallest rooms in a house, it's important to make maximum use of space. Cupboards and cabinets can store and conceal all the bottles and jars typically found in bathrooms. An open sink can always be enclosed to provide more cupboard space (Figure 39), or you can add wall-hung cabinets and shelves to keep things in order.

Shelves can be installed around and above toilets, sinks, tubs, doorways, and mirrors. If your client has a bathroom with a high ceiling, you can even hang shelves above the shower. Just be sure that the shelves

FIGURE 39—A cupboard has been built around the basin in this small bathroom to provide more storage room.

are above showerhead level and yet still within reach. A clear Lucite shelf can simply rest across the sides of a tub and hold bottles of oil, scrub brushes, and even a book. And if your client wants something big and substantial to hold toiletries, you might add a wall system on a free wall.

Installing a TV in the Bathroom

Some people are happy with a small portable TV sitting on the vanity beside the sink, but there are better options. The ideal solution is to install a flat-screen TV in a mirror above the vanity. When the TV is off, the vanity has a mirror. When the TV is on, its image shows up in place of the mirror. The future is here!

Choice of bathroom hardware is important to the overall decorative effect. Towel racks, rings and hooks, toothbrush holders and soap holders, toilet paper rolls, doorknobs, and cabinet knobs are all available in various shapes, sizes, and styles. Many of these items are made in materials from brass to bronze, metal, plastic, ceramic, and glass. Figure 40 shows a selection of different types of faucets for bathroom basins. When you begin to examine showrooms that deal in such fixtures, you'll begin to see how wide a selection you have.

Also available are costly patterned fine china basins and matching faucet fixtures that most clients appreciate, if they can afford them. Colored and patterned bathroom fixtures are a matter of taste and style. If a client is interested in an outlandish color scheme, however, you should try to steer the client to something he or she isn't apt to tire of immediately.

Mirrors and proper lighting are very important bathroom accessories. Mirrors can be attached to a wall or framed and flanked by a pair of sconces. In homes under construction, be sure that ample-sized mirrors are to be provided and that they're properly lit (Figure 41). This consideration is something that shouldn't need to be corrected after the house or condominium unit is completed. If the bathroom under construction looks suspiciously sterile, you can easily change its appearance with simple decorative flair.

FIGURE 40—Bathroom fixtures come in a large assortment of styles and materials.

FIGURE 41—A large mirror with good lighting is an asset to any bathroom.

If your client has a full downstairs bathroom, but would like a powder room to be used by guests during parties, you can install a ceiling-to-floor blind or shutter, or use a decorative screen. Bathroom problem solving isn't difficult. It's limited by the functional uses of the small room. No matter what the builder offers or what sort of bathroom comes in a new home, any decorator who thinks about client's needs can create attractive, functional bathroom interiors with a minimum of effort.

Pool and Patio Areas

Outdoor swimming pools and patio areas present decorating matters for you to consider. For example, a patio, terrace, or deck area needs to be unified with the rest of the decor (Figure 42). Especially if the area is visible from the interior of the house, it must be decorated as carefully as any other part of the house. It's part of the home. Lamps, rugs, and furniture choices today include totally weatherproof finishes for outdoor entertaining.

FIGURE 42—Patio furniture is as variable in line and style as indoor furniture. Therefore, it should be selected with just as much concern for appropriate design. (Photography courtesy of Drexel Heritage Furnishings)

The style of furnishings selected for an outdoor area should be in keeping with the overall decor of the home. The colors should also be in keeping with the indoor color scheme, so there's a smooth transition from indoors to outdoors rather than a jarring change. The home interior, itself, will seem more spacious when the interior and exterior spaces are coordinated.

When choosing terrace furniture, consider practicality first. Everything should be sun and rain resistant and must dry quickly after being exposed to moisture. If you select materials such as wrought iron, be sure they've been treated with a rust-inhibiting paint or finish.

Manufacturers of patio furniture have developed a variety of styles to suit just about every patio. There are all sorts of permanent or portable patio pieces on the market, from elegant wrought iron to casual deck chairs and tables. Wood patio furniture is suitably rustic, whereas wicker, rattan, and bamboo lend a more romantic air.

Most patio furniture should be fairly lightweight, so that it can be easily moved for convenient groupings and storage. What do you do, however, when your client has an apartment terrace on the tenth floor of a building in an area that's very windy? Most conventional outdoor furniture is too lightweight to withstand more than a light breeze. For the apartment terrace, custom-built banquettes and benches or cushioned furniture with heavy metal frames would be more appropriate. Solid-wood and cast-aluminum furniture is also heavy enough to withstand wind.

Frequently, now, when a swimming pool is installed, a Jacuzzi is installed nearby. The visual effect is best if the two are tied together by color, tile pattern, and/or shape.

Pools generally require fences or walls for privacy and protection. These can look stark and unattractive unless their expanse is broken up with color and plants for a softening effect. Plants in pots must be selected to withstand splashes of chlorinated water.

A pool area is frequently wall-to-wall cement. A covering, such as weatherproof carpeting, can be added to make the area more appealing. Outdoor carpeting is no longer limited. There are now a variety of choices and colors available.

Entries

A decorator should look at the entry to a client's home with an eye to adding one strong decorative note outside the door to pique the visitor's interest. Remember that the entry to a home is the first thing visitors see (Figure 43). If the home is just under construction, the decorator may make a few more contributions to the exterior of the entry—at least if it's a custom home.

Most condominium developments have strict guidelines to assure an overall uniform appearance to the area. These guidelines require all exterior decor to conform to certain standards—which usually means identical features.

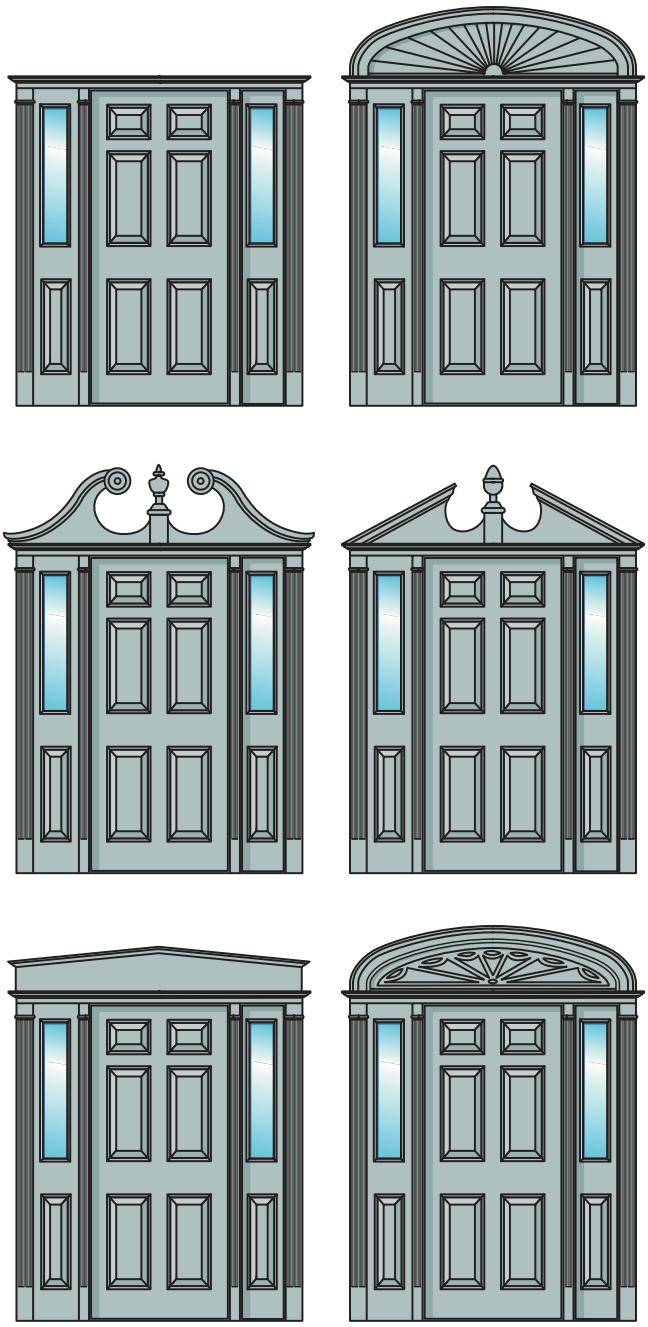


FIGURE 43—Entries should match the decor of a home and should provide interest to those arriving at the home.

In custom building or condominium units where exterior variations are allowed, consider such details as the finish of the door, choice of hardware (doorknob, door knocker, and hinges), and style of street numbers. Also consider the merit of adding a gate to lend importance to the entry, and consider how the style of the gate selected can enhance the appearance of the exterior.

But be warned. Many—even most—architects have their own strong visions of what the exterior should look like. Therefore, they're apt to react like an artist who has had someone run a finger across a wet painting if you intrude on their creation. It may be best to wait until the house is completed and the architect has gone on to other projects before making exterior additions or changes or before advising your client of your suggestions for such changes to be made.

Fireplaces

If the living room blueprint shows a fireplace, be sure to determine the dimensions of the fireplace and the exact style and facing materials that will be used. In some cases, the buyer may have an option concerning fireplace facing. The style and proportions of a fireplace are of vital concern to the interior decorator. The fireplace is generally a focal point in the room. It's important that its scale and style be compatible with the decor.

When planning an interior, select the style of the fireplace to blend with the decor. If an existing fireplace isn't suitable for the proportions of a room or the planned décor, it should be refaced to make it blend. The cost is worthwhile because of the great importance the fireplace has in a room. Change the appearance of a fireplace just as you would change an inappropriate piece of furniture.

Figure 44 illustrates several styles of fireplaces. Any period furnishings in a room should match the style of the fireplace.

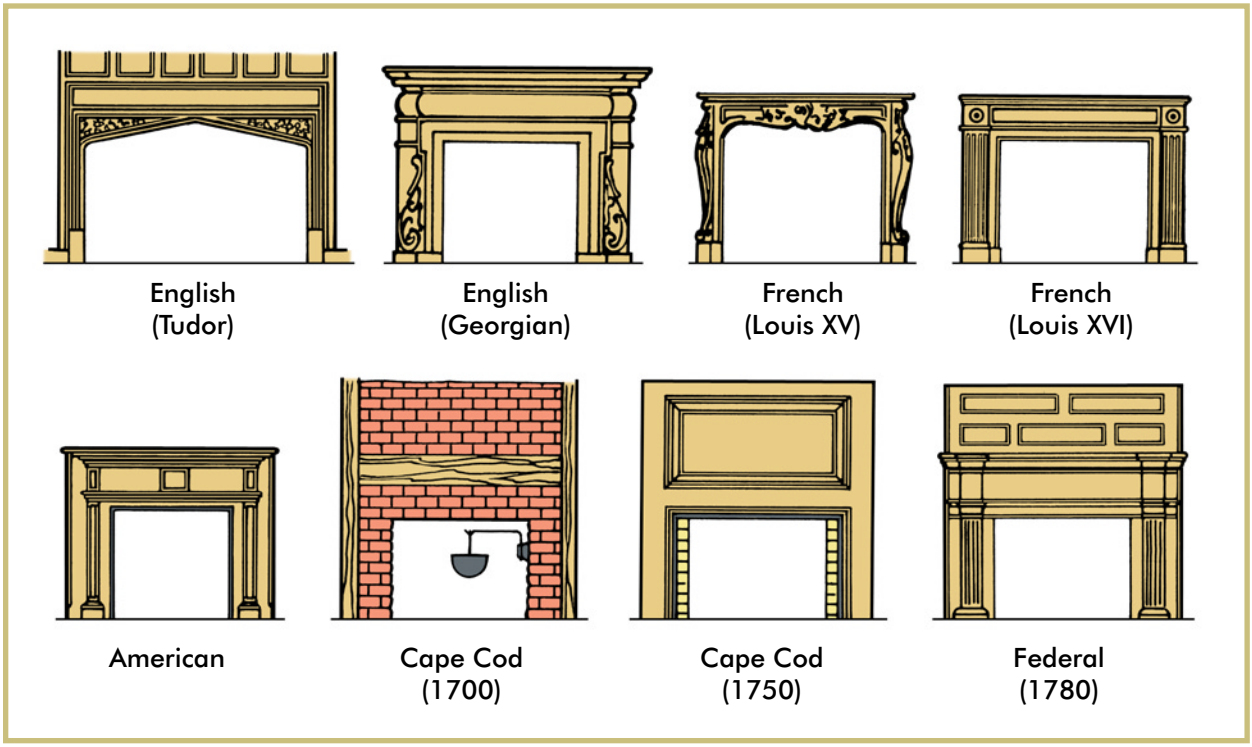


FIGURE 44—These drawings illustrate common period styles for fireplaces. Make sure the style of a fireplace matches the style of furniture you're using.

Fireplace accessories are also available in a variety of styles. They too should be selected to enhance both the fireplace style and the room decor.

Common fireplace accessories are shown in Figure 45. The *fireplace grate* holds the logs off the surface of the fireplace floor so that air can circulate around the logs. The *andirons* prevent the logs from rolling out onto the hearth. The *wood holder* stores extra logs for feeding the fire. The *tool set* generally includes three tools: a poker for adjusting the position of burning logs and a brush and dustpan for cleaning up ashes.

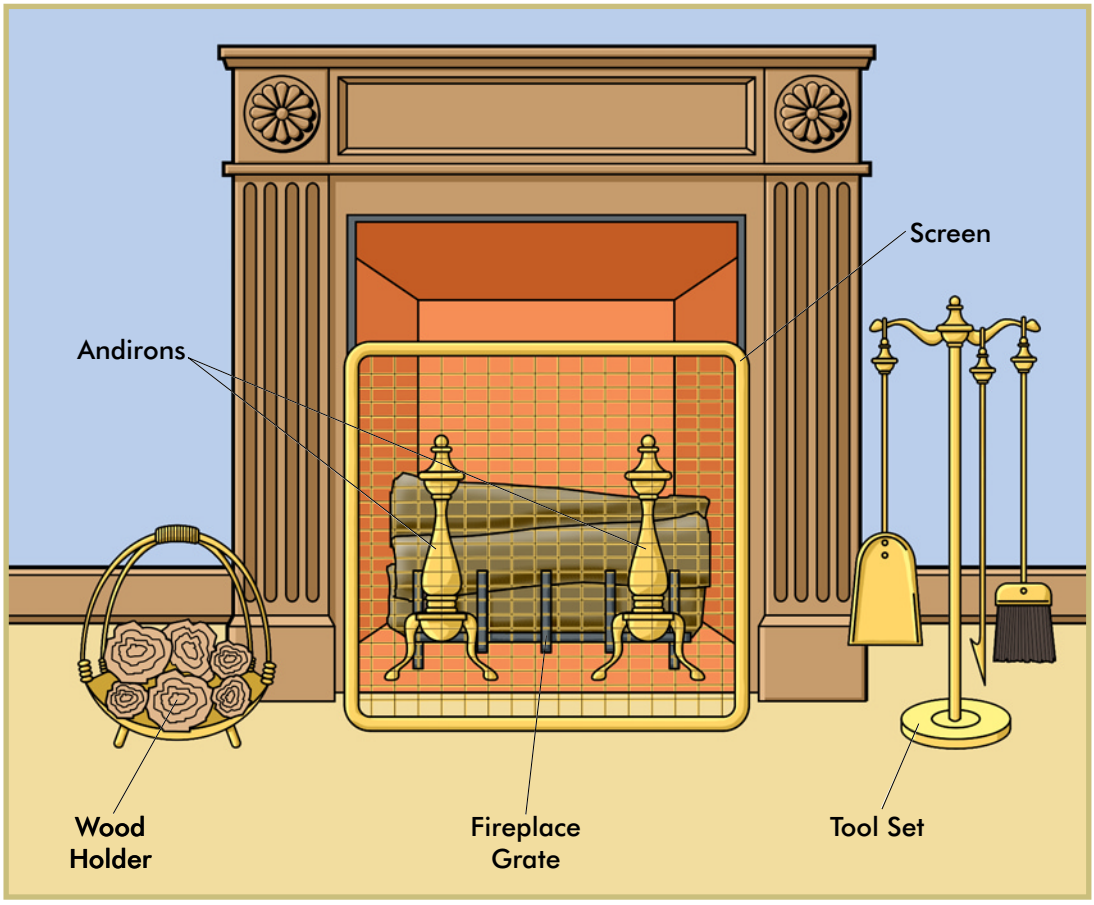


FIGURE 45—Common Fireplace Accessories

> ***Gel Fuel Fireplaces***
>
> Not all clients who want fireplaces have building codes or chimneys to make that possible. But gel fuel fireplaces don't emit any smoke, odor, or toxic fumes. They don't even need vents. So they'll work in any house. For photos and more information on gel fuel fireplaces, type **gel fireplaces** in any search engine. You should find a world of information.

Fireplace facings and moldings are materials the decorator should determine with the builder. In Figure 46, the fireplace molding and picture frame work together to enhance the family's favorite painting.

FIGURE 46—Fireplace facings and moldings should complement the style of the room. (Reprinted with permission from Ethan Allen Home Interiors, Clarks Summit, PA)

Dining Areas

You've already learned about the space relationship of a dining room or dining area to kitchen facilities. Since a dining table is most frequently centered in a dining area, there are usually few decorating problems relating specifically to the construction of the room, other than the scale of the furniture.

One dining area decorating point that you can consider during the building stages relates to styles and colors of the room. Frequently, a client will buy new linens and tableware for a new dining room. In some cases, the client wants the decorator's advice on these choices. Even if you're not asked, it can be helpful to the finished appearance of the room if you volunteer suggestions about color and style. For example, brilliant red cranberry glassware can be most flattering to an Early American dining decor. However, if the client buys cranberry glass simply because she likes it and then uses it in a very modern, peach room, the table settings may clash with the overall appearance of the entire room.

If a client will have only one set of china and silverware, by all means urge that the selections be very simple designs. Also, clear crystal is most adaptable to varied table settings (Figure 47). Tie-in decor colors can be brought in through linens, mats, and centerpieces.

FIGURE 47—Clear crystal is a good choice for a variety of different place settings. (Reprinted with permission from Lexington Furniture Industries)

Bedrooms

Plans for bedrooms should be checked for two particular points: unbroken wall space and window placement. Because of the need for closets and passageways to corridors and adjoining baths, as well as the popularity of French doors opening onto a garden, a decorator may be hard-pressed to find enough space in the floor plan to position a bed, let alone any other furnishings. It's worth trying to have architectural changes made in the house so you don't end up with bedrooms that prove difficult to decorate because of wall space.

In a bedroom with very broken-up walls, an architect will try to provide a wide, unbroken wall space for a large bed by placing a window high in that wall. In such a case, points that particularly concern you are whether the window is high enough to prevent drafts and to not conflict with the height of a headboard. Also important are the materials that will be appropriate for covering such a window.

Draperies are impractical for this situation, and miniblinds may not provide enough draft protection. Shutters are often the best solution. When shutters or other built-in treatments will be used, they shouldn't be ordered until the window is constructed. Dimensions may change slightly from the blueprint to the finished room.

Children's rooms present the same questions of unbroken wall space, and yet another question because of their typical size. Children's rooms are most often the smallest rooms in the house. Yet, children often have more possessions to be stored in their rooms than do their parents who have a spacious master suite. Very few parents are given to keeping doll collections or several hundred comic books in their bedroom. Yet most children are expected to keep their possessions in their rooms.

Because of this space problem, a decorator should learn to make suggestions to maximize the space available. For example, a trundle bed (Figure 48) can provide extra room during the day when the second bed isn't needed. In addition, a decorator should consider questions of proper housing for a child's collections and hobbies while the house is being built. The more built-ins that can be included in any child's room, the more convenient and comfortable the room will be.

FIGURE 48—A trundle bed can best utilize a small space. (Photo courtesy of Thomasville Furniture Industries)

If two children share a long, narrow bedroom, consider placing the beds head to head, as shown in Figure 49. The heads can be separated by a bookcase with alternate shelf areas closed for privacy. Each area can then be decorated to suit the child.

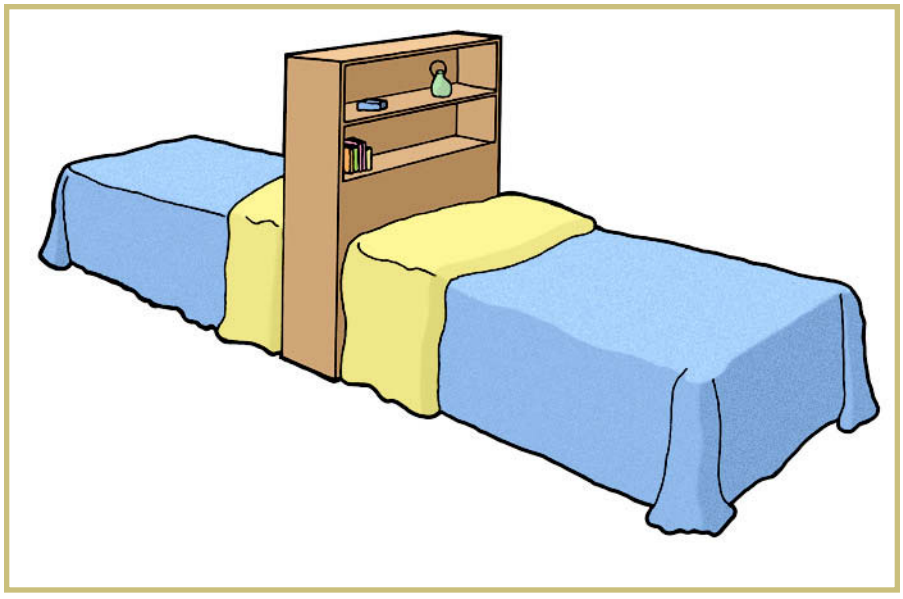


FIGURE 49—This creative use of space can solve a privacy problem with siblings.

Sound Control

Inspect a blueprint, the client's lot, and the surrounding neighborhood to consider what sound problems may exist. Is the location of the future home near an airport? Do any windows face a heavily traveled street? Does the house sit high on a hill? Remember that sound rises and becomes magnified between hills. Is there a school nearby?

How can you protect your client against these sources of sound? Of course, you'll consider using heavy draperies or other window coverings instead of leaving windows dramatically bare. In addition, tightly sealed double-pane windows can cut down exterior sound considerably, as can thick insulation within the walls. Fences and dense trees and shrubs help to further reduce noise. A landscaper should be consulted for assistance in selecting the best trees and shrubs for this purpose.

Energy Savers

The high cost of gas and electricity can make heating and cooling the rooms in a home quite expensive. Along with noise-reduction improvements, you may be called on to help your clients save energy. Several energy-saving methods allow you to retain the style and comfort of a home. *Caulking* the outside of windows and doors and applying weatherstripping to the inside help to protect a home from outside cold in the winter and heat in the summer. If a house is located in a particularly cold area, storm windows should be used to seal in heat. If the house is in a very hot area, or if certain rooms are exposed to the sun all day, extended roof eaves help to shade the windows and block out much of the sun's heat.

Caulking is a flexible material used to seal a gap between two surfaces. Caulking windows and doors on a home stops air leakage.

Draperies, curtains, and shades also help to keep cold air from coming in or going out. Heat-reflective, see-through window shades are helpful; they not only keep out the heat, but also protect furniture from fading. In addition, they add an element of privacy for your client. These window shades come in many colors, styles, and textures.

Solar window film provides protection against glare and heat and helps prevent fading of fabrics, artwork, and furniture. Views, comfort, energy savings, and 99.9% ultraviolet fade protection are a few of the reasons that window film is recommended by interior decorators, architects, and builders.

Old-fashioned paddle-blade ceiling fans (Figure 50) made an energy-saving comeback in the early 1980s. These ceiling fans are used by themselves or as aids to air-conditioning efficiency. The fans come in a range of colors, styles, and sizes. Some have fans alone; others come with lights. Most fans come with a switch to change the direction of the blades for winter or summer efficiency. In the winter, the blades force the warm air down toward the floor; in the summer, the blades draw the warm air upward. The mounting rods that attach the fans to the ceiling come in various lengths for different height ceilings. *Huggers* are fans that fit close to the ceiling for rooms with lower-than-average heights. Ceiling fans help to condition the air while providing decorative interest to the ceiling.

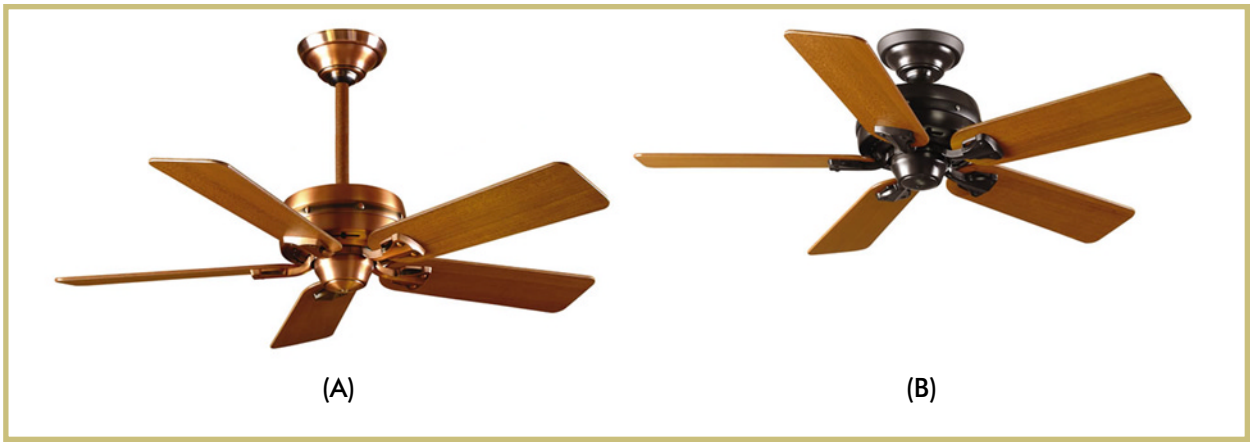


FIGURE 50—The fan in view A has a long mounting rod; the one in view B "hugs" the ceiling.

Placement of thermostats within a home can affect fuel efficiency. If an automatic thermostat is placed in a cooler part of the house or where it's subjected to cold drafts from an exterior door, the furnace will tend to run needlessly, keeping most of the house too hot.

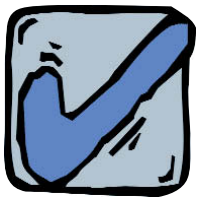
On the other hand, a thermostat positioned on a wall right near a fireplace will frequently register a falsely high temperature when the fireplace is in use. In this case, the furnace won't run often enough, causing the rest of the room and the house to be too cold. Homeowners may set the thermostat unnaturally high, wasting heat because the thermostat isn't allowed to do its job of regulation. Fireplaces can be energy-saving aids when used properly.

Mastering the Grand Plan

The best preparation you can gain for dealing with home builders and planning a decor from the building stage is to inspect many sets of blueprints and apply the questions presented in this study unit.

Check out Web sites that offer varieties of housing plans. Before you study these plans, invent a family that's consulting you during the construction stage of their home. Then match up the family to a house plan. In each case, determine how well the plan will suit your client's needs, and most of all, what decorating problems it will present and how you can solve them.

The more experience you gain in reading house plans in this way, from a decorator's viewpoint, the freer your mind will become to devote itself to the creative planning that's the most rewarding part of your activity.



Self-Check 3

1. Which is considered the more efficient kitchen plan—a U plan or a corridor plan? Why?

   _____

   _____

2. *True or False?* A thermostat positioned near a fireplace will register the correct room temperature.

3. Your client is six feet tall. She has purchased a home she plans to stay in for the next three years until she's transferred to a new job location. She complains that the work surfaces in the kitchen are too low for her. Would you recommend altering the kitchen to raise the counter surfaces? Why or why not?

   _____

   _____

4. What single factor of a building plan most influences whether you can utilize kitchen cabinet space for features such as a pull-out kitchen television or a communications center?

   _____

   _____

5. What is a bidet?

   _____

6. What is the most infrequently used space in a kitchen?

   _____

7. *True or False?* Old bathroom fixtures, such as tubs and sinks, can be painted.

8. What are the three types of bathroom basins?

   _____

Check your answers with those on page 64.

Self-Check 1

1. specifications
2. True
3. blueprint
4. Upgrades
5. Preliminary
6. False
7. exterior elevations

Self-Check 2

1. Plan B is more practical. Plan A requires heavy-duty flooring. The traffic pattern in Plan A is poor. For example, to answer the front door, someone in the kitchen must travel through a pantry, the dining room, and the living room. To reach the kitchen from the garage requires going outdoors and around two sides of the house. And to get to a closet from the entry, one must walk all the way across the living room. The wear and tear of this plan on the floor would be great. Heavy-duty flooring would be a necessity. Even more important, this plan would be very wearing on the people trying to live with it.

   Plan B has far better traffic patterns. The kitchen can be easily reached from the entry and the garage. Also, the kitchen is adjacent to the dining room. The closet is in the entry hall.
2. 32 in. (81 cm)
3. The greatest advantage of a one-story plan is the absence of stairs to climb.
4. The three basic activity zones on a floor plan of a home are the living, sleeping, and working zones.

ANSWERS

Self-Check 3

1. The U plan generally allows the most efficient placement of kitchen appliances and convenient traffic patterns.
2. False
3. No. Any permanent alterations that aren't suitable or appealing to most people can be expected to affect the resale value of a home. Since this client knows she'll be moving in three years, raising the countertops to a level less comfortable for most people would be an unwise move.
4. Potential use of kitchen space is influenced by whether there's direct access from the kitchen to a garage that can be used for additional kitchen storage.
5. A bidet is an open-seated bathroom stool with running water used for personal hygiene.
6. Cabinet space just below the ceiling is sometimes wasted. The inventive decorator will attempt to utilize this space in unusual ways.
7. True
8. The three types of bathroom basins are pedestal, wall-hung, and countertop.